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SUBTLE *Representing Angels in Byzantium* BODIES



Subtle Bodies

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GLENN PEERS

Subtle Bodies

Representing Angels in Byzantium

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A B B R E V I A T I O N S

<i>AASS</i>	<i>Acta Sanctorum</i> , 71 vols., Paris, 1863–1940.
<i>AB</i>	<i>Analecta Bollandiana</i>
<i>ArtB</i>	<i>Art Bulletin</i>
<i>B</i>	<i>Byzantion</i>
<i>BF</i>	<i>Byzantinische Forschungen</i>
Blondel	<i>Macarii Magnetis quae supersunt ex inedito codice</i> , ed. C. Blondel, Paris, 1876.
<i>BMGS</i>	<i>Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies</i>
Bonnet	M. Bonnet, <i>Narratio de miraculo a Michaelie Archangelo Chonis patrato</i> , Paris, 1890.
<i>BS</i>	<i>Byzantinoslavica</i>
<i>BZ</i>	<i>Byzantinische Zeitschrift</i> .
<i>CA</i>	<i>Cahiers Archéologiques</i> .
Cameron, “The Language of Images”	Averil Cameron, “The Language of Images: The Rise of Icons and Christian Representation,” in <i>The Church and the Arts</i> , Studies in Church History, vol. 25, ed. D. Wood, London, 1992, I–42.

DACL	<i>Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie</i> , ed. F. Cabrol and H. Leclercq, Paris, 1924–.
DChAE	Δελτίον της Χριστιανικής Ἀρχαιολογικής Ἐταιρείας.
DOP	<i>Dumbarton Oaks Papers</i> .
DTC	<i>Dictionnaire de théologie catholique</i> , ed. A. Vacant and E. Magenot, Paris, 1899–1950.
EEBS	Ἐταιρείας Βυζαντινῶν Σπουδῶν Ἐπετηρῖς.
Fisher, Michaelis Pselli Orationes	Michael Psellus, <i>Oratio in Archangelum Michaelem</i> , in <i>Michaelis Pselli Orationes Hagiographicæ</i> , ed. E. A. Fisher, Stuttgart and Leipzig, 1994, 230–56.
GCS	Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte.
Holl	“Die Schriften des Epiphanius gegen die Bilderverehrung,” ed. K. Holl, <i>Sitzungsberichte der Königlich Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften</i> 35.2(1916):828–68 [= K. Holl, <i>Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kirchengeschichte</i> , Tübingen, 1928; rp. Darmstadt, 1964, II:351–87].
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i> .
JAC	<i>Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum</i> .
JöB	<i>Jahrbuch der österreichischen Byzantinistik</i> .
JECS	<i>Journal of Early Christian Studies</i> .
JTS	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i> .
Leanza	S. Leanza, “Una versione greca inedita dell' <i>Apparitio S. Michaelis</i> in monte Gargano,” <i>VetChr</i> 22(1985):291–316.
Mansi	G. D. Mansi, <i>Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio</i> , 53 vols. in 58 pts., Paris and Leipzig, 1901–1927.

<i>MGH</i>	<i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica: Scriptores rerum Langobardicarum et Italicarum saec. VI-IX</i> , Hannover, 1878.
<i>OCP</i>	<i>Orientalia Christiana Periodica</i> .
<i>PG</i>	<i>Patrologia cursus completus, Series graeca</i> , ed. J.-P. Migne, 161 vols. in 166 pts., Paris, 1857–1866.
Pitra	J. B. Pitra, <i>Spicilegio Solesmense complectens sanctorum patrum scriptorumque ecclesiasticorum anecdota hactenus opera</i> , 4 vols., Paris, 1852–1858.
<i>PL</i>	<i>Patrologia cursus completus, Series latina</i> , ed. J.-P. Migne, 221 vols. in 222 pts., Paris, 1844–1880.
<i>PO</i>	<i>Patrologia Orientalis</i> .
PTS	Patristische Texte und Studien.
<i>RAC</i>	<i>Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum</i> , Stuttgart, 1950–.
<i>RBK</i>	<i>Reallexikon zur byzantinischen Kunst</i> , Stuttgart, 1963–.
<i>REB</i>	<i>Revue des études byzantines</i> .
<i>RivAC</i>	<i>Rivista d'archeologia cristiana</i> .
<i>RQ</i>	<i>Römische Quartalschrift für christliche Altertumkunde und für Kunstgeschichte</i> .
<i>RSBN</i>	<i>Rivista de studi bizantini e neellenico</i> .
SC	Sources Chrétiennes.
Settimane	Settimane di studi del centro italiano di studi sull'alto medievo.
<i>TM</i>	<i>Travaux et Mémoires</i> .
TU	Texte und Untersuchungen.
<i>VetChr</i>	<i>Vetera Christianorum</i> .

INTRODUCTION

On the Tension between Theology and Cult

Angel, literally “messenger,” can designate all manner of negotiation between heaven and earth and refer to any member of God’s spiritual host. Scripture is unequivocal in stating the existence of an angelic host and is full of diverse examples of the appearance of these transcendental creatures. But the difficulties of perceiving and identifying angels are signaled in scripture simply by the number of guises they assume and impressions they make. Angels appear in scriptural accounts as multiform, awful beings before whom such witnesses as Zacharias are overwhelmed and left speechless (Luke 1:20–22). They appear as clouds and fire (Ex. 13:21–22, 23:20–23), formless voices (Gen. 21:17) and, in the visions of Ezekiel (Ez. 10) and Isaiah (Is. 6), as complex and ultimately unfathomable creatures. The identity of these manifestations in scripture is often obscure; and Christian exegesis with its typological interpretation only compounded the difficulty when it discerned identities not overt in Hebrew scripture.

The scriptural definition of angelic nature as fire and wind (Ps. 104:4) established the belief in the immaterial and enigmatic qualities of angelic beings. Incorporated into the Epistle to Hebrews—“And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire” (1:7)—this definition became the

exegetical cornerstone of Christian angelology. But although the general definition was settled by scripture, the precise nature of the proportion and blend of elemental forces was never fully explained; angelic nature was held to be beyond humanity's ken.¹

Angelology—as historians have named patristic scrutiny of angels²—is replete with uncertainties, and these uncertainties were the source of the special problems of access and familiarity in devotion.³ For Christians, many questions persisted about angels' nature, organization, duties and comprehension.⁴ Agreement among theologians about the specifics of angelic nature was not possible given the transcendence of the objects of speculation, but angels figure so large in scripture and devotion that the subject could not be avoided.

The fire and spirit composition posited a relative value for angelic nature that placed the angels somewhere between the radically different natures of humanity and God. Such theologians as Theodotus in the second century called the angels “intellectual fire, intellectual spirit,”⁵ distinct in property from material fire and light.⁶ Theodotus thought that angels did have bodies—at least they were seen as such—although these bodies, compared to ours, were without form and without corporeality.⁷ Methodius (d. ca. 311) said that the angelic

1. See the texts gathered by J. Turmel, “Histoire de l’angélologie des temps apostoliques à la fin du Ve siècle,” *Révue d’histoire et de littérature religieuse* 3(1898):41ff.

2. See, for instance, Turmel, “Histoire de l’angélologie,” 289–308, 407–34, 533–52, and also his “L’angélologie depuis le faux Denys l’Aréopagite,” *Révue d’histoire et de littérature religieuse* 4(1899):289–309, 414–34, 536–62.

3. Angelology is the subject of many studies: see, for instance, *DACL* I.2:208off., *DTG* I:1189ff., *RAC* V:53ff., *RBK* III:13ff., and M. Bussagli, “Angeli,” *Enciclopedia dell’arte medievale* (Rome, 1991–) I:629–38, idem, *Storia degli angeli. Racconto di immagini e di idee* (Milan, 1991), and *Le ali di Dio. Messaggerie e guerrieri alati tra oriente e occidente*, ed. M. Bussagli and M. D’Onofrio, Milan, 2000.

4. See R. Roques, “Introduction,” in Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, *La Hiérarchie Céleste*, SC vol. 58, ed. G. Heil and M. de Gandillac (Paris, 1958) lxxi.

5. Preserved in the writings of Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150–d. before 215). See *Excerpta ex scriptis Theodoto*, in *Stromata Buch VII und VIII. Excerpta ex Theodoto. Eclogae propheticae. Quis dives saluetur. Fragmente*, GCS vol. 17, 2d ed., ed. O. Stählin, L. Früchtel and U. Treu (Berlin, 1970) 110.

6. See, for instance, Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica*, VII.15.15, GCS vol. 43, ed. K. Mras (Berlin, 1956) 393–94. Pseudo-Athanasius, *Quaestiones ad Antiochum Ducem*, V, PG 28:601C, said that the angels are as different from material creation as the sun from the stars.

7. *Excerpta ex scriptis Theodoto*, in *Stromata Buch VII und VIII*, 110–11.

nature is equally composed of air and fire, like souls.⁸ A writer later identified as Macarius the Great (ca. 300–ca. 390) said that the angels have subtle (*λεπτά*) bodies.⁹ Others stated that the angels are beings without body and without matter, but not *completely* so.¹⁰ Gregory of Nyssa (ca. 330–ca. 394) appears to put the angels out of all contact with matter.¹¹ And Gregory of Nazianzus (329/30–ca. 390) said that the angels can only be perceived by reason because they are composed of pure spirituality or something approaching it—he could not say for certain.¹² Complete agreement concerning the degree of participation of the angels in matter was never possible. Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite¹³ and John of Damascus (ca. 675–ca. 750)¹⁴ came down on the side of the essential spirituality of the angels.

Maintaining a distance between the angels and God on the one hand, and angels and humanity on the other, was an important consideration for theologians. In his text praising the Archangel Michael, for example, Chrysippus (ca. 405–479) was careful to establish the similarities and differences of the natures of Michael and God.¹⁵ He deduced the nature of God from Deuteronomy 4:24

8. Photius, *Bibliothèque*, Tome V ('Codices' 230–241), ed. R. Henry (Paris, 1967) 100.10–13.

9. *Homilia*, IV.ix, in *Die fünfzig geistlichen Homilien des Makarios*, PTS vol. 4, ed. H. Dörries, E. Klosterman and M. Kroeger (Berlin, 1964) 33–34.

10. Turmel, "Histoire de l'angéologie," 422ff.

11. *Oratio catechetica magna*, VI, PG 45:28AB.

12. *Orationes xlvi*, XLV.5, PG 36:629B.

13. See R. Roques, *L'univers dionysien. Structure hiérarchique du monde selon le Pseudo-Denys* (Paris, 1954; rp. Paris, 1983) 154ff. On the nature of the angels Pseudo-Dionysius himself is almost completely silent. Pseudo-Dionysius took it as an assumption that the angels were essentially spiritual in nature. In the summary of Pseudo-Dionysius's work by George Pachymeres (1242–ca. 1310), angels are described as bodiless and immaterial; they are immaterial, immortal and deiform (*De divinis nominibus*, VI.2, PG 3:856C); and in *De div. nom.*, IV.1, PG 3:693C he states: "It is as bodiless and immaterial that they are perceived by the intelligence; and inasmuch as they are intelligences, they perceive themselves in a manner not of this world...." A defining characteristic is that the celestial hierarchy is more immaterial and more spiritual than the human (e.g., *De ecclesiastica hierarchia*, I.4, PG 3:376B). Roques writes (ibid., 155 n9), "C'est surtout par opposition aux caractères de notre hiérarchie humaine que ceux de la hiérarchie céleste prennent tout leur relief."

14. *Expositio fidei*, II.3, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos. II Expositio fidei*, PTS vol. 12, ed. P.B. Kotter (Berlin, 1973) 45–48.

15. A. Sigalas, "Χρυσίππου πρεσβύτερου Ἐγκώμιον εἰς Ἀρχάγγελον Μιχαήλ," *EEBS* 3(1926):85–93.

(“For the Lord thy God is a consuming fire”) and Deuteronomy 9:3, as well as John 4:24 (“God is a spirit”).¹⁶ But even though Psalm 104:4 and Hebrews 1:7 indicate that the angels are also fire and spirit, Chrysippus said that one must not make the mistake of assuming that the angels are the same as God. They are decidedly not equal in nature or honor, since the creator cannot be equal to his creations. God alone is uncircumscribable, unviewable, and of purer flame.

Chrysippus was mindful to base discussion of angels on scriptural reference;¹⁷ scripture, not cult, was the proper guide.¹⁸ The same ostensible dependence on divine revelation in scripture generally characterized theologians’ descriptions of angels, as well as descriptions in miracle tales of angels’ work. Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite (fl. ca. 500?), in his elaborate taxonomy of heaven in the *Celestial Hierarchy*, attempted to set his structure on a scriptural foundation, and yet he found that he had to rely on other sources to answer some questions. In a sense, he derived all his orders for his *Celestial Hierarchy* from the Bible,¹⁹ and his hierarchy differed from those of his predecessors in the systematic laws applied to the orders, their positions, actions and interactions.²⁰

Pseudo-Dionysius rigorously examined scripture for disclosures of the heavenly hierarchy so that a precise structure of angelic beings might be advanced. He divided the hierarchy into triads, the first consisting of seraphim, cherubim and thrones, the second of virtues,

16. Sigalas, “Χρυσίππου πρεσβυτέρου,” 89.

17. Sigalas, “Χρυσίππου πρεσβυτέρου,” 86.

18. A. Sigalas, *Des Chrysippos von Jerusalem Enkomion auf den hl. Johannes den Täufer, Texte und Forschungen zur byzantinisch-neugriechischen Philologie*, vol. 20 (Athens, 1937) III.

19. Roques, “Introduction,” lxxi.

20. See Roques, “Introduction,” lvii ff. Pre-Dionysian attempts include the Life of Peter the Iberian, regarding a vision of John the Eunuch (see E. Honigmann, “Pierre l’Ibérien et les écrits du Pseudo-Denys l’Aréopagite,” in *Mémoires de l’Académie Royale de Belgique, Classe des Lettres et des Sciences morales et politiques* 47/3(1952):18–19); Cyril of Jerusalem (ca. 315–386), *Catechesis mystagogica*, V.6, in *Catéchèses mystagogiques*, SC vol. 126, ed. A. Piédagnel (Paris, 1966) 154; John Chrysostom, *Homiliae 1–67 in Genesim*, IV, PG 53:44; and the *Constitutiones Apostolicae* (second half of the fourth century), VIII.12.8, in *Didascalia et Constitutiones apostolorum*, ed. F.X. Funk (Paderborn, 1905; rp. Turin, 1962) 498. And see A. Louth, *Denys the Areopagite* (Wilton, Conn., 1989) 35ff.

dominations and principalities, and the last of powers, archangels and angels. His is the best known and most complete attempt at describing the hierarchy, and his symbolic theology influenced at a fundamental level perception of and approaches to angelology from the sixth century on.

Pseudo-Dionysius necessarily depended to some extent on sources other than scripture for the completeness and symmetry of his hierarchy, notably the tradition of the church, Pseudo-Dionysius's own master, Hierotheus, and even his own opinion at particularly difficult junctures.²¹ At one point, for example, Pseudo-Dionysius had to resort to a divergent reading of scripture. In Pseudo-Dionysius's system, only the archangels and angels are in direct contact with humanity. The appearance of the seraphim to Isaiah is, therefore, a direct contradiction of the hierarchical scheme, and Pseudo-Dionysius had to propose a symbolic reading of Isaiah 6:6 wherein the seraphim is actually an angel appearing under symbolic form.²² Clearly, achieving knowledge of God by this method was conditional and subject to personal interpretation.

Pseudo-Dionysius insisted on the inability of human intelligence to understand divine things fully; for him, knowledge only comes through the “truly mysterious darkness of unknowing.”²³ Writing about the exegetical possibilities of Isaiah 6:6, he described the necessary process of gaining knowledge of the unknowable as a personal endeavor that is necessarily incomplete.²⁴ Human knowledge of the divine derives in this process largely from personal contemplation of

21. Roques, “Introduction,” lxxx ff.

22. Roques, “Introduction,” lxxviii–lxxix.

23. *De mystica theologia*, I.3, PG 3:1001A; Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, *The Complete Works*, trans. C. Luibheid and P. Rorem (New York, 1987) 137.

24. *De coelesti hierarchia*, XIII.4, in *La Hiérarchie Céleste*, SC vol. 58, ed. G. Heil and M. de Gandillac (Paris, 1958) 161. Roques, “Introduction,” lxxvi, commented on this passage in this way, “Il y aura donc, en matière théologique, une part d’hypothèse et d’estimation humaine. Mais, soulignons-le, la pointe de relativité s’applique ici aux divers types d’explication qui ont essayé de montrer comment le séraphim d’Isaïe pouvait être un ange, mais non point sur le fait même qu’il l’était: aux yeux de Denys et en vertu de la structure et des lois générales de la hiérarchie, c’est là une vérité absolue qui relève de l’enseignement le plus manifest et le plus sûr de l’illumination théarchique.”

symbols or sensible phenomena, but contemplation does not provide final answers, only provisional knowledge.²⁵ For Pseudo-Dionysius, “signs and symbols pointed the seeker of truth on his way, not logical argument.”²⁶

In contrast to the circumspect attempts of theologians to come to terms with angelic nature and activity, popular cult attached great, if not overweening, importance to the near-omnipotence of angelic beings. To be sure, the cult of the Archangel Michael—the most popular of the “personalized” angels in the Byzantine world—did not depend upon these theological speculations for its working premise, although it did share in the fundamental difficulties of comprehension and description inherent in angelology.²⁷ The Christian cult of Michael, and of the angels, was founded on Jewish and pagan beliefs, and it burgeoned naturally out of this wide “power base.” But it also thrived because of its animistic roots. Evidence of Jewish belief in angels who have control over certain natural phenomena is found in the Book of Jubilees (ca. 140–100 B.C.E.), which describes angels, for instance, of fire, wind and darkness;²⁸ in the Book of Enoch (third century B.C.E.), angels have control over frost, snow and other phenomena.²⁹ In short, each natural phenomenon had an angel. Texts that cite Michael in this role as “nature angel” specify his special con-

25. See Roques, *L'univers dionysien*, 158ff.

26. Cameron, “The Language of Images,” 28.

27. L. Heiser, *Die Engel im Glauben der Orthodoxie* (Trier, 1976) 222, states that the liturgy is no more specific about the angels’ nature than the theologians are. In the liturgy the angels are given the general attributes of “insubstantial,” “bodiless,” “immaterial.” However, as he notes, “Nicht in theoretischen Erörterungen wird die Natur der Engel erkannt, sondern aus der heilgeschichtlichen Erfahrung ihres tätigen, hilfreichen Dienens für Gott und die Menschen” (*ibid.*, 226). Appearances in history are the only really dependable factor in cult practice.

28. *The Book of Jubilees or The Little Genesis*, trans. R. H. Charles (London, 1902) 40ff. (c.II).

29. *The Book of Enoch or 1 Enoch. A New English Edition*, ed. M. Black (Leiden, 1985) 57 (60:17–22), 58 (61:10).

And see J. Daniélou, *Histoire des doctrines chrétiennes avant Nicée. Vol. I. Théologie du judéo-christianisme* (Tournai, 1958) 140–41; W.v. Rintelen, *Kultgeographische Studien in der Italia Byzantina. Untersuchungen über die Kulte des Erzengels Michael und der Madonna di Costantinopoli in Südtalitalien* (Meisenheim am Glan, 1968) 29; W.v. Rintelen, “Kult- und Legendenwanderung von Ost nach West im frühen Mittelalter,” *Saculum* 22(1971):84–85; A. L. Williams, “The Cult of the Angels at Colossae,” *JTS* 10(1909):415–16. The angels are

cerns as water and snow.³⁰ In Egypt, Michael “took over” the role of the Nile God so that he was held responsible for the dew and the rain, and he alone was said to go through the veil to provide life.³¹ Similarly, Michael is described in terms of immanent protection unrestrained by anyone but God.

The sun riseth upon all the world through the supplication of Michael.... The earth beareth its fruits through the supplication of Michael. The whole world was reconciled again to God [by Michael], and he it is who delivereth everyone from the snares of the Devil. We find the intercession of Michael in the strenuous work of our hands.... We find the intercession of Michael in the body of the vine and of the gladness which is in the wine.... For the Archangel standeth by every one who crieth up to God with all his heart and helpeth him.³²

Belief in the elemental character of Michael is not restricted to the Coptic church, although Michael was especially venerated in Egypt.³³ Writing in the late ninth/early tenth century, Pantaleon also remarks on this same elemental character of the Archangel.³⁴ And in his work praising the Archangel Michael, Michael Psellus (1018–1081?) noted the benign immanence of Michael near his shrine: “Such things as the zephyr is able to do for us and breezes

placed over every phenomenon and if named they can offer protection: for example, E. Legrand, *Bibliothèque grecque vulgaire*, 9 vols. (Paris, 1881; rp. Athens, 1974) II:xviii ff.

30. See W. Lueken, *Michael. Eine Darstellung und Vergleichung der jüdischen und der morgenländisch-christlichen Tradition vom Erzengel Michael* (Göttingen, 1898) 52ff., and 131ff.

31. Lueken, *Michael*, 131–32.

32. E.A.W. Budge, *Miscellaneous Coptic Texts in the Dialect of Upper Egypt* (London, 1915) 757.

33. See, on Coptic veneration, E. Amélineau, “Le christianisme chez les anciens Coptes,” *Revue de l’histoire des religions* 15(1887):54ff. He cites a large number of legends in Christian tradition in Egypt concerning the angels and the majority of these are about Michael; Michael’s also are the most varied, “Cet archange était sans cesse en mouvement, tantôt en guerrier, tantôt en batelier, descendant sur la barque aérienne jusqu’au fond des enfers, trempant son aile dans les lacs de feu et en retirant les damnés” (*ibid.*, 56). See further, Lueken, *Michael*, 70ff., and C.D.G. Müller, *Die Engellehre der koptischen Kirche. Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der christlichen Frömmigkeit in Ägypten* (Wiesbaden, 1959) 8ff.

34. *Encomium in maximum et glorioissimum Michaelem coelestis militiae principem*, PG 98:1265B–8A.

from the north refresh our bodies, these things the Archangel is able to do.”³⁵ Michael is the invisible and propitious force that alleviates heat in this region and lifts the oppression of all kinds of illnesses and sufferings. An important component of the angels’ nature is fire and likewise Michael makes himself manifest in this form, as miracle stories testify.³⁶ In Christian belief, angels command and guard their constituent parts, water, air and fire.

The early Church inherited a flourishing, and in some ways troublesome, cult of angels.³⁷ The warning in the Pauline Epistle to the Colossians about the dangers of untoward worship of the angels is an indication of such a problem.³⁸ The Christian cult of angels seems to have been heavily influenced by certain heterodox Jewish practices, as well as pagan beliefs in divine messengers.³⁹ The famous cult of Michael at Colossae, later Chonae, in western Asia Minor, grew out of this active, syncretistic belief in the angels that was common to Jews and pagans both.⁴⁰

35. Fisher 256.639–43. And see also E.A. Fisher, “Nicomedia or Galatia? Where Was Psellos’ Church of the Archangel Michael?” in *Gonimos. Neoplatonic and Byzantine Studies Presented to Leendert G. Westerlink at 75*, ed. J. Duffy and J. Peradotto (Buffalo, 1988) 179.

36. See chapter 5.

37. The cult of angels, and specifically of the Archangel Michael, was threatening even to the position of Christ in the church. Lueken, *Michael*, 133ff., exhaustively described this problem; but see also J. Barbel, *Christos Angelos. Die Anschauung von Christos als Bote und Engel in der gelehrten und volkstümlichen Literatur des christlichen Altertums*, Theophaneia, vol. 3 (Bonn, 1941) 230ff., Daniélou, *Histoire des doctrines chrétiennes*, 167ff., J.P. Rohland, *Der Erzengel Michael. Arzt und Feldherr. Zwei Aspekte des vor- und frühbyzantinischen Michaelkults* (Leiden, 1977) 67ff.

38. Col. 2:18, “Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into these things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshy mind.” This rather obscure prescription has been the subject of debate since the exact nature of this worship at Colossae is not known. R. Reitzenstein, *Poimandres. Studien zur griechisch-ägyptischen und frühchristlichen Literatur* (Leipzig, 1904) 79ff., thought this warning was directed at a cult of animistic forces.

39. For the pagan cult of angels, see A.R.R. Shepherd, “Pagan Cults of Angels in Roman Asia Minor,” *Talanta* 12/13(1980/81):77–101; F. Sokolowski, “Sur le culte d’angelos dans le paganisme grec et romain,” *HTR* 53(1960):225–29; and F. Cumont, “Les anges du paganisme,” *Revue de l’histoire des religions* 72(1915):159–82.

40. See Williams, “The Cult of the Angels at Colossae,” 435ff. R.L. Fox, *Pagans and Christians* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1986) 380, 742 n18, suspected “a pagan cult of angels” at Chonae, and he notes indications of worship of angels in pagan contexts nearby. The verb ἐμβοτεύειν (“to enter into, to approach something in order to investigate it”) is used at Col. 2:18, and although this verb is also found in the context of the cult of Apollo at

Local causes for the cult at Chonae would seem equally important, however. The geography of the region was long noted as particularly fertile for gods—or angels—with awesome power over natural phenomena.⁴¹ Local causes and larger questions of improper worship combined at Colossae to create awkwardness over cult activity directed to the angels. The Epistle to the Colossians seems to have been addressed specifically to the sizable Jewish community at Colossae and in the region of Phrygia, where pagans were also in-

Claros, one need not connect its forms of worship with Colossae for that reason alone. F. R. Trombley, *Hellenic Religion and Christianization c. 370–529*, 2d ed., 2 vols. (Leiden, New York and Köln, 1995) I:153ff., understands a pagan cult of angels behind the worship of Michael at Chonae.

The transition of cult, pagan to Christian, is often difficult to discern and should not be taken at face value, as I have attempted to demonstrate in my “The Sosthenion near Constantinople: John Malalas and Ancient Art,” *B* 68(1998):110–20.

The likeliest course for Michael at Chonae is through hellenised Jews in the area. As Marcel Simon writes, “la substitution a toutes chances d’être pré-chrétienne, et d’avoir été opérée par ces juifs syncrétisants dont on entrevoit l’influence à travers les développements polémiques de l’épître aux Colossiens.” See *Verus Israel. Étude sur le relation entre chrétiens et juifs dans l’empire romain (135–425)* (Paris, 1948) 430–31. F.O. Francis claimed that some form of mystery cult took place at Colossae, but the evidence is slim; see “Humility and Angelic Worship in Col. 2:18,” *Studia Theologica* 16(1963):109–34 [= *Conflict at Colossae. A Problem in the Interpretation of Early Christianity Illustrated by Selected Modern Studies*, ed. F.O. Francis and W.A. Meeks (Missoula, Mont., 1973) 163–95].

41. For example, Williams, “The Cult of the Angels at Colossae,” 435, “The remarkable natural phenomena at and near Colossae must from remote ages have appealed to the human mind, and provided material to which both primitive and later religions could cling.” See, too, O. Rojdestvensky, *Le culte de saint Michel et le moyen age latin* (Paris, 1922) xvi; Rintelen, *Kultgeographische Studien*, 25; Rintelen, “Kult- und Legendenwanderung,” 85; and O.F.A. Meinardus, “St. Michael’s Miracle of Khonae and Its Geographical Setting,” *Εκκλησία καὶ Θεολογία* 1(1980):459–69.

R. Chandler noted in his *Travels in Asia Minor: Or, an account of a tour made at the expense of the Society of Dilettanti* (Dublin, 1775) 230–31, “It is an old observation, that the country about the Maeander, the soil being light and friable, and full of salts generating inflammable matter, was undermined by fire and water. Hence it abounded in hot springs, which, after passing underground from the reservoirs, appeared on the mountain, or were found bubbling up in the plain or in the mud of the river: and hence it was subject to frequent earthquakes; the nitrous vapour, compressed in the cavities, and sublimed by heat or fermentation, bursting its prison with loud explosions, agitating the atmosphere, and shaking the earth and waters with a violence as extensive as destructive; and hence, moreover, the pestilential grottoes, which had subterraneous communications with each other, derived their noisome effluvia; and serving as smaller vents to these furnaces or hollows, were regarded as apertures of hell, as passages for deadly fumes rising up from the realms of Pluto. One or more of these mountains perhaps has burned; and it may be suspected, that the surface of the country has in some places been formed from its own bowels.”

volved in angelolatry.⁴² The local cult of angels was not so easily dislodged, however, and at the Council held in 380 in nearby Laodicea it was singled out for attack:

It is not right for Christians to abandon the church of God and go away and invoke angels and hold conventicles; for these things are forbidden. If, therefore, anyone is found devoting himself to this secret idolatry, let him be anathema, because he abandoned our Lord Jesus Christ and went after idolatry.⁴³

And somewhat later Theodoret of Cyrrhus (ca. 393–ca. 466) again criticized these excesses of angelolatry:

This disease long remained in Phrygia and Pisidia. For this reason also a synod in Laodicea of Phrygia forbade by a decree the offering of prayer to angels; and even to the present time oratories of the holy Michael may be seen among them and their neighbors.⁴⁴

Wilhelm Lueken noted a scholion to this passage that makes it clear that Theodoret was referring to Michael's shrines in and around Colossae.⁴⁵ Evidently, Chonae was the long-standing center of a heterodox devotion to Michael in particular and to angels in general.

42. Williams, “The Cult of the Angels at Colossae,” 436ff.; C. Mango, “Germia: A Postscript,” *JÖB* 41(1991):297; on the number of Jews in Phrygia, Lueken, *Michael*, 80–81, and K. Belke and N. Mersich, *Phrygien und Pisidien*, Tabula Imperii Byzantini, vol. 7 (Vienna, 1990) 223, for citations.

It can be inferred that the so-called Epistle to the Colossians was directed at angelolatry in Asia Minor in general, even if the Epistle may not have been directed at the eponymous community. H. Koester, *History and Literature of Early Christianity* (Philadelphia, 1982) 264, denied the possibility of Paul’s authorship but still thought that the Epistle was directed to the church at Colossae.

43. See P.-P. Joannou, *Discipline générale antique (IVe-IXe siècles). Tome I.2. Les canons des synodes particuliers* (Grottaferrata, 1962) 144–45. The translation of Canon 35 of the Council of Laodicea is from J. B. Lightfoot, *St. Paul’s Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon* (London, 1879) 68. See Williams, “The Cult of the Angels at Colossae,” 435; Simon, *Vérité Israel*, 429–30; L. Robert, *Hellenica. Recueil d’épigraphie de numismatique et d’antiquités grecques*, vol. XI–XII (Paris, 1960) 432ff. And on the anti-Jewish tendencies of the Council of Laodicea, see Rintelen, *Kultgeographische Studien*, 27, and Lueken, *Michael*, 81.

44. *De providentia orationes* x, II, PG 82:613B; trans. Lightfoot, *St. Paul’s Epistles*, 68.

45. Lueken, *Michael*, 75.

This composite portrait of devotion to angels in the Early Christian and Byzantine world, as outlined above, reveals conflicting elements. On the one hand, popular, sometimes heterodox devotion to elemental, guardian creatures clearly existed, as the troublesome and flourishing history of the devotion to Michael at Chonae demonstrates; and, on the other, there was an abundance of theological speculation that carefully avoided crossing paths with this popular devotion and instead focused on issues of nature and organization—in other words, on decorous angelology. This study, however, explores how these apparently contradictory approaches to God's invisible multitude could intersect. The possibility of idolatry, a fear of the early church that still acted on the consciences of eighth- and ninth-century Byzantines, was never distant from discussion of angels and their representations. It informed the debates over the appropriateness of representing angels, a debate that began in the early church but was not resolved until the ninth century. The course of this debate as it incriminated material images is the subject of the first three chapters of this book. The worship of angels and of their images is the subject of fourth chapter; this chapter examines theology and miracle stories, and discusses the ways in which both of these genres dealt with the danger of worship of angels and presented seemly examples of approach instead. The fifth chapter looks at miracle stories of the Archangel Michael at Chonae to examine their verbal representation, that is, how these texts both make Michael more apprehensible to their audience and manage the difficulties of description with which artists also—in their own way—contended.

While this study deals primarily with textual evidence of attitudes towards angels and their images, it is the work of an art historian. It draws on intellectual history, which includes theology, miracle stories, poetry and sermons, and incorporates them into a history of representation. At the center of the study are the cultural conditions of seeing and understanding: an epistemology for which angels are simply the most trying and dangerous case. Transparent images of formless beings made for especially treacherous rapids, which the Byzantines attempted to stop up; this study looks at the shifting waters and dams that having images of angels necessitated.

One

ISSUES IN REPRESENTING ANGELS

Given the difficult nature of angels and their incorrigible cult, the question arose early in Christianity: How does one make an image of an incorporeal being, and what meaning does that image have for devotion to and comprehension of that being? This question, however, formed part of a larger search for ways of attaining knowledge of God and of things divine. As Averil Cameron's insightful synthesis of different aspects of Byzantine culture demonstrates, it was this search and the distinct approaches to gaining knowledge that led directly to the crisis of Iconoclasm in the eighth and ninth centuries.¹

Iconoclasm arose in the 720s, signaled *perhaps* by the dramatic destruction of the image of Christ on the Chalke Gate of the imperial palace in Constantinople.² Its direct cause was likely political concerns and the personal inclination of the emperor Leo III

1. Cameron, "The Language of Images"; and also her "Byzantium and the Past in the Seventh Century: The Search for Redefinition," in *The Seventh Century. Change and Continuity. Proceedings of a joint French and British Colloquium held at the Warburg Institute 8–9 July 1988*, ed. J. Fontaine and J. N. Hillgarth (London, 1992) 250–76.

2. See M.-F. Auzépy, "Le destruction de l'icône du Christ de la Chalcé par Léon III: Propagande ou réalité," *B* 60(1990):445–92, and G. Peers, "Breathless, Speechless Images: On the Chalke Gate Epigram," *Hommages Margaret Head Thomson*, Cahiers des études anciennes, vol. 34, ed. L. Finnête and A. P. Booth (Trois Rivières, Québec, 1998) 109–12.

(r. 716–740), but its intellectual roots are deep in the early church, in divergent approaches to created matter—primarily images—in Christian life and worship.³ Iconoclasm as imperial policy was continued and reinforced by Leo's son, Constantine V (r. 740–775) but halted under the regency of Irene who ruled for her son Constantine VI and solely from 797 to 802. Irene convened the last ecumenical council in 787, the second held at Nicaea, which reintroduced image worship in the empire. From 815 to 843, Iconoclasm was again enforced until Michael III (r. 842–867) declared for image worship under the influence of his mother, Theodora. The effect of this prolonged period of Iconoclasm was intense debate over images and worship. This study mines that debate for the information it provides about attitudes towards representing angels.

Cameron's study provides a framework for a more specific analysis of one aspect of the quest for knowledge of the holy, namely depictions of angels. She delineates the process by which early Byzantine society attempted to define and systematize methods of acquiring knowledge and recognizing truth. In Cameron's view, Iconoclasm “was a manifestation of an uncertainty which people felt about their own thought world.”⁴ And indeed, the period leading up to Iconoclasm reveals two divergent approaches to gaining knowledge in Byzantine culture: symbolism and literalism in art and worship were the two poles of the debate. These conflicting views on art and worship characterize attitudes toward, and perceptions of, angels and their representations. The debate over symbolism and literalism also involved questions about the place of created things in Christian worship; intellectual devotion and material assistance were mutually exclusive for some of the theologians discussed here. Figurative art

3. On the origins of Iconoclasm under Leo III, see S. Gero, *Byzantine Iconoclasm during the Reign of Leo III with Particular Attention to the Oriental Sources* (Louvain, 1973) and D. Stein, *Der Beginn des byzantinischen Bilderstreits und seine Entwicklung bis in der 40er Jahre des 8. Jahrhunderts* (Munich, 1980). On the roots of Iconoclasm, see P.C. Finney, *The Invisible God. Early Christians on Art* (Oxford, 1994), E. Kitzinger, “The Cult of Images in the Age Before Iconoclasm,” *DOP* 8(1954):83–150, and Sister Charles Murray, *Rebirth and Afterlife. A Study of the Transmutation of Some Pagan Imagery in Early Christian Funerary Art* (Oxford, 1981).

4. Cameron, “The Language of Images,” 4.

was one alienating feature within a larger complex of material aids introduced into worship in the period being examined.

The possibility of idolatry that arose from the introduction of material aids into Christian worship was the underlying and central apprehension that united anti-image theologians. The rejection of images of angels was directly related to that fear of idolatry, but it also involved other issues of primary concern in the early church, namely the worship of angels as gods and pagan attempts to equate Christian angels with their own gods. In the late fourth and fifth centuries, canon 35 of the Council of Laodicea and the repeated warning of Theodoret of Cyrrhus aimed at increasing awareness of the problem and at extirpating the embarrassing problem from the Christian community.⁵ Macarius Magnes in the fourth century combatted the pagan attempt at a rapprochement by denying any resemblance between Christian worship of angels and pagan devotion to their gods.⁶ John of Thessalonike continued to fend off just such advances from pagan quarters into the seventh century.⁷ Evidently, the issue maintained a shame-inspiring purchase within the church. Christian practice, likely in the region of Chonae and perhaps far beyond, evidently encouraged the expression of such pagan views, and pagans could draw parallels between the two apparently irreconcilable beliefs. The shrine at Chonae was a prime site for overweening angel worship, and the stories describing the miracles of Michael were directed at cleansing a situation mortifying for church authorities; the emphasis on the blameless character at the center of the story of the miracle at Chonae was intended to counter behavior that was perhaps not normal but at least perceived to be possible within the cult of angels.⁸ A literal approach to worship, therefore, implicated other issues in the early church that are not simply theological abstractions

5. See the Introduction.

6. See chapter 2.

7. See the Conclusion, and also G. Peers, "Imagination and Angelic Epiphany," *BMGS* 21(1997):113–31, and D. Krausmüller, "God or Angels as Impersonators of Saints. A Belief and its Contexts in the 'Refutation' of Eustratius of Constantinople and in the Writings of Anastasius of Sinai," *Gouden Hoorn* 6/2(1998/9):5–16.

8. See chapter 4.

but that involved problems of Christian worship within the material, created world and before insubstantial messengers and guardians of that world.

Before such elusive creatures as angels, Christian artists encountered a representational dilemma. Yet they did not consider this problem of depicting spiritual creatures to be insurmountable, as they represented angels from the earliest period. They based their depictions on scriptural description, and, like theologians such as Chrysippus and Pseudo-Dionysius, they prudently stayed on the path scripture had established for angelic appearances. In many ways, artists avoided problems of representations and described angels straightforwardly as men, thereby ignoring the metaphysical qualities of angels altogether. Yet Christian artists did not always show angels as if they were illustrating the Bible literally. Christian artists developed an iconography of angels that commemorated angelic appearances on earth, most often using wings to indicate the symbolic quality of these appearances. In one important sense, the common iconography of the winged man is reductive: it does not describe the bodiless, immaterial nature of angels; rather, it represents God's messengers generically.

The iconography of angels is unique in Christian art in that it described the difficult flashes of epiphany of the formless angels allusively; the iconography of Christ and the saints presented their human forms, derived from corporeal lives on earth, as the iconography of the angels could not. While it is true that angels appropriated human form for some of their appearances on earth, this form was only one among many forms possible for angels. Christ and the saints had secure and comprehensible forms that persisted with a degree of stability throughout their lives on earth; in contrast, angels were unstable and, in the end, unknowable.

Christian images depended on the life that the subject led on earth for their significance in cult since they stated historical likeness and actual presence in the stead of the person represented. As Hans Belting has demonstrated, images of saints grew directly out of the Late Antique practice of honoring the dead through portraits; images be-

came venerated like relics and were treated like vestiges that had contact with the person represented.⁹ Christ and the Virgin were, of course, difficult cases as both rose bodily into heaven; miraculous images, wondrously imprinted with Christ's face or taken from eyewitness observation such as by the Evangelist Luke, fulfilled this desire for verification of earthly being and for contact with the divine.¹⁰

Representing God—that is, the ability to represent absolute transcendence—was the central issue in the period leading to, and including, Iconoclasm, and it determined the selection and introduction of material concerning angels who are also transcendent, though not, like God, absolutely. The central defense for images of God was the incarnation; supreme divinity assumed human form, and lived, suffered and died in that form. Angels also become comprehensible, though not to this same degree, and for this reason were often a corollary for this primary question of Christian representation. But the issue of angels' images diverges immediately from any direct comparison with images of Christ. The angels were never incarnate, only give the illusion of being so—as, for instance, Raphael deluded Tobias into believing him human. Although angels are comprehensible in some fashion, they present a set of problems different from Christ's representability. Their formless nature and illusory apparitions, so well documented in scripture, apocrypha and miracle stories, define the angels' images as allusive to a spiritual reality not altogether apprehensible. Without the anchor of incarnate being that Christ's images refer to, angels' images are symbolic in a distinct way, necessarily referring to the paradox of bodilessness and immateriality made momentarily and partially known.

Angels, it appears, could not participate in the same process of representation as Christ and the saints: they did not manufacture miraculous images, they did not relinquish relics. Altogether their timeless, near-eternal selves denied historical ratification to their like-

9. H. Belting, *Bild und Kult. Eine Geschichte des Bildes vor dem Zeitalter der Kunst* (Munich, 1990) 42ff., 92ff.

10. On these issues, see the papers in *The Holy Face and the Paradox of Representation*, Villa Spelman Colloquia, vol. 6, ed. H. L. Kessler and G. Wolf (Bologna, 1998).

Figure 1. Icon of the Archangel Michael (?), Cabinet des Médailles, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, sixth century.
Photo: Bibliothèque Nationale.



nesses. Painters of icons of angels relied on tried and true modes of representation for depicting these beings. A sixth-century Coptic panel painting of the archangel Michael (?), now in the Cabinet des Médailles, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris (fig. 1), reveals a clear dependence on idealizing funerary portraiture of the Late Antique period: large, staring eyes give a sense of timeless abstraction; the figure faces the viewer frontally, only betraying the impression of immovability by his right hand raised in benediction; the circular nimbus is depicted in front of the rectangular frame in the upper right hand corner, lending a contrapposto effect to the hand below.¹¹ While these elements pro-

11. See Belting, *Bild und Kult*, 110, fig. 47, and J. Durand in *Byzance. L'art byzantin dans les collections publiques françaises* (Paris, 1992) 144, no. 98.

vide animation, perhaps a notion of activity benevolently directed at the worshipper, the figure itself is anonymous, undistinguished by feature or by inscription; it is so reliant on pagan idealizing portraiture in iconography and style that only the heroic quality of the figure—and not its individuality—is clear. The stumps of wings alone betray a hint of angelic identity and nature; the icon is not, then, unambiguous in its representation of qualities unique to angels.

If Christian artists sidestepped certain problems of angelic nature in frequently representing angels as men, these images of angels raised difficulties of perception and comprehension on the part of the viewer. Angels are formless, bodiless and immaterial, so a true likeness of such beings in material images is impossible. The relation between the image and model is, therefore, problematic, and definition of any relation relied on viewers' ability to discern symbolic rather than literal "likeness." Byzantine viewers did approach images of angels discriminately: the tension between material representation and immaterial nature is the compelling and attractive quality of their images. Indeed, this tension is the defining characteristic of angels' images and distinguishes their images from other Christian representations.

On a literal level, the iconography of the angels presents a faithful rendering of certain appearances that God's messengers had made on earth. In Christian art, angels are depicted as youths, most often winged; they are generalized in appearance to the point of anonymity, and only the Archangels are consistently named by inscription in representations. Cherubim and seraphim are often recognizable, though not always distinguishable from each other, by the many wings and eyes that scripture prescribed. Yet cherubim, seraphim and other angelic beings—that is, the thrones, principalities, powers, virtues and dominations mentioned in scripture—could also be represented by the generalized iconography of the winged youth. Clearly, the form of a man with wings not only commemorated the human aspect occasionally made manifest to humanity but also referred, more broadly, to all angelic beings.

Although a degree of anthropomorphism became a consistent iconographic element for angels, anthropomorphism itself was not

predetermined. For instance, scripture advances different agencies behind the cloud of smoke and pillar of fire that led the Israelites out of the desert in Exodus. At one point (13:21–22), “the Lord went before them”; but at other points in the journey, the text specifies that the Lord’s angel guided the people (14:19, 23:20–23, 32:34, 33:2). Although Exodus is ambiguous about these manifestations’ identity, the cloud of smoke and pillar of fire were generally considered to be emanations of God, that is angels.¹² The angels in illustrations of these events in Exodus presented representational possibilities for painters. They could be depicted either in the form made manifest to the Israelites in the desert, or as men, a form revealed elsewhere in scripture.

In the case of the smoke and fire of Exodus, literal adherence to scripture characterizes the depictions of these epiphanies, and painters did not use the iconography of the winged youth to indicate the nature and ultimate identity of the agencies behind the cloud and fire. Frescoes in cubicula C and O in the fourth-century via Latina Catacomb in Rome both represent a column with a blaze on top beside Moses receiving the law; these two columns are placed on a level above a crowd standing before a building.¹³ The *Christian Topography*, written in the sixth century, shows a different context for representing this manifestation of God’s providence. Illuminations accompany passages from Exodus and other biblical books, collated by the author in an attempt at a Christian history prefigured by events in Hebrew Scripture. The context is primarily narrative, although Christian typology is the final concern. This particular manifestation of divinity, the column and cloud, is depicted with faithful attention to scripture and interpreted as a sign of God’s providence fulfilled with the coming of Christ.

12. See M. Barker, *The Great Angel. A Study of Israel’s Second Angel* (London, 1992) 32, 86. Eventually, the Archangel Michael became identified with these manifestations on account of his guardianship of Israel stated at Daniel 12:1. See, for instance, Pantaleon, *Narratio*, IX, PG 140:579C.

13. See W. Tronzo, *The Via Latina Catacomb. Imitation and Discontinuity in Fourth-Century Roman Painting* (University Park and London, 1986) 1, 59, figs. 4, 5.

Rather than depicting an angelic being or God, the illuminators chose a literal depiction of a cloud and a column with a flame atop it (fig. 2).¹⁴ Yet the depictions, like scripture, ultimately refer to enigmatic revelations of God's emanations, that is angels, as the column and cloud in the manuscripts and the frescoes allude to changeable beings, unclear identities and obscure meanings. Both examples, despite their different contexts and literal attention to text, demand an understanding on the part of the viewer that the column and cloud are symbolic of aspects of divine, multiform beings. By avoiding any attempts at visually referring to the nature of the epiphanies, the painter shifts the burden to the viewer who must supply an interpretation based on his or her knowledge of scripture. While this burden is not exclusive to viewing angels, it has a special role since their mutable nature demands special processes of interpretation.

Angels' metaphysical qualities notwithstanding, during the early centuries of Christian art, painters, mosaicists and sculptors depicted angels as men. They first devised an anthropomorphic iconography because angels are sometimes described in scriptural accounts as having made themselves manifest as men. The earliest extant representation of an anthropomorphic angel appeared in the third century in an Annunciation in the Catacomb of Priscilla in

14. See K. Weitzmann and G. Galavaris, *The Monastery of Saint Catherine at Mount Sinai. The Illuminated Greek Manuscripts. Volume One: From the Ninth to the Eleventh Century* (Princeton, 1990) 63–64, figs. 141, 142, pls. IXa, Xa; and Cosmas Indicopleustes, *Topographie chrétienne*, SC vols. 141, 159, 197, ed. W. Wolska-Conus (Paris, 1968–1973) I:47ff.

The column with fire and the cloud are represented in illustrations in the two eleventh-century manuscripts of this sixth-century work at Sinai (cod. 1186, fols. 73r, 73v, 74r) and Florence (Laur. Plut. IX, 28, fols. 103r, 103v, 104r). The illustrations were not invented for these two manuscripts and the eleventh-century recensions rely ultimately on the sixth-century prototype of the *Christian Topography* for their model. The Sinai and Florence versions more faithfully reproduce the illumination tradition of the *Christian Topography* than the other member of this manuscript family, the ninth-century Vaticanus graecus 699, and so these illustrations of Exodus can be safely related to a pre-Iconoclastic model.

One should properly follow the identification of the author of the *Christian Topography* with Constantine of Antioch rather than Cosmas Indicopleustes, as Wanda Wolska-Conus has persuasively argued. See her “Stéphanos d'Athènes et Stéphanos d'Alexandrie. Essai d'identification et de biographie,” *REB* 47(1989):28ff.



Figure 2. The Israelites at the Twelve Springs, *The Christian Topography of “Cosmas Indicopleustes,”* Monastery of St. Catherine, Sinai, cod. 1186, fol. 73r, eleventh century.
Reproduced through the courtesy of the Michigan–Princeton–Alexandria Expedition to Mount Sinai.

Rome. The scriptural narrative (Luke 1:28–38) describes the messenger of God merely as an “angel,” and the painter chose to represent this messenger as a man wearing a tunic and standing firmly on the earth.¹⁵ This solution to the potential difficulties in representing formless beings was used frequently in the first centuries of Christian art and never disappeared from the Byzantine iconographic tradition. Indeed, it shows that describing the special qualities of angels was felt sometimes not to be possible or not to be of paramount concern. In Early Christian art, angels were most often depicted in this earthly guise, as a man either bearded or unbearded,¹⁶ and in this way artists described one comprehensible aspect out of the many that scripture ascribes to angels. However, in the fresco in the Catacomb of Priscilla, the angel is not explicitly identified by inscription or iconographic peculiarity, and the attribution of the scene as the Annunciation is ambivalent. Clearly, the image of a man did not itself indicate the distinct identity of an angel nor could it describe directly any transcendental element in the event.

For some mosaicists, painters and sculptors, the literal depiction of angels as men was restrictive since anthropomorphism could not express qualities peculiar to angels.¹⁷ But in Late Antique art iconographic means that could indicate the distinct identity and metaphysical nature of angels were available to Christian mosaicists, painters and sculptors: by the end of the fourth century, wings were standard—though not exclusive—attributes of angels. They provided the means for referring to supernatural qualities particular to angels that could not be expressed easily in visual terms: transcendence, velocity, ethereality and uncontained activity. For instance, John Chrysostom (ca. 347–407) wrote:

15. See M. Bussagli, *Storia degli angeli. Racconto di immagini e di idee* (Milan, 1991) 48; and P. Testini, *Archeologia cristiana. Nozioni generali dalle origini alla fine del sec. VI* (Rome, 1958) 258.

16. The bearded angel is found as late as the fifth century, for example, on an ivory representing the Baptism of Christ in the British Museum; see W. F. Volbach, *Elfenbeinarbeiten der Spätantike und des frühen Mittelalters*, 3d ed. (Mainz am Rhein, 1976) pl. 60 (#115).

17. G. Berefelt, *A Study on the Winged Angel. The Origin of a Motif* (Stockholm, 1968) 15.

What do the powers reveal to us by these wings? The exaltedness and ethereality and lightness and speed of their nature. For which reason, Gabriel descends fleet; not that the wings are part of the bodiless power, but that he descends from realms on high and returns to his abode whence he was sent.¹⁸

In Byzantine art, wings became an established and comprehensive distinguishing sign of the offices and nature of angelic beings—and, rarely, of other beings as well, Christ, for instance, or John the Baptist in his angelic guise.¹⁹ In the case of the angels, however, the oc-

18. *In Isaiam dominum (Is. 6:1), homiliae 1–6*, II, PG 56:137. And, also, *Ad eos qui scandalizati*, III, PG 52:484, “Therefore when you see the seraphim flying around that exalted and well-fitted throne, their sight walled round by the projection of their wings, hiding their feet, backs and faces, and sending forth fearfully strong cries, do not think wings and feet, and that they are winged. For these are invisible powers. But [it is] on account of the unapproachability of their images, and the incomprehensibility of sitting near an actual throne. For indeed he is incomprehensible and unapproachable to them also, and yet he too condescended.”

19. Christ represented as an angel is a rare iconography based on Isaiah 9:6, “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given … and his name shall be called the Angel of the Great Counsel (Μεγάλης Βούλῆς Ἀγγελος), Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” Christ in this guise is depicted winged, and unbearded, but with cross-nimbus or in a mandorla, thereby differentiating him from the heavenly host proper. On this iconography, see S. Der Nersessian, “Note sur quelques images se rattachant au thème du Christ-ange,” *CA* 13(1962):209–16; J. Meyendorff, “Iconographie de la Sagesse divine dans la tradition byzantine,” *CA* 10(1959):269, and also his “Wisdom–Sophia: Contrasting Approaches to a Complex Theme,” *DOP* 41(1987):391–401; and D.I. Pallas, “Ο Χριστός ὡς ἡ θεία Σοφία. Η Εικονογραφικὴ Περιπέτεια μᾶς θεολογικῆς Ἐννοιᾶς,” *DChAE* 15(1989–1990):127ff., 137ff.

The first extant representation of the winged John the Baptist is found at the church of Sv. Ahilije in Arlije from ca. 1296 (G. Millet, *La peinture du moyen âge en Yougoslavie (Serbie, Macédonie et Monténégro)*, 4 vols. [Paris, 1954–1969] II: pl. 87.1; and *RBK* III:623ff.). The iconography may very well predate this representation, as Lossky points out instances of seventh-/eighth-century commentary on the angelic nature of John the Baptist. See L. Ouspensky and W. Lossky, *The Meaning of the Icons* (Boston, 1952) 108. The iconography has been examined by J. Lafontaine-Dosogne, “Une icône d’Angélos au Musée de Malines et l’iconographie du St Jean-Baptiste ailé,” *Bulletin de Musées Royaux d’Art et d’Histoire* 48(1976):121–44, and M. Bussagli, “Il Precursore. Giovanni l’angelo, martire della luce,” *Abstracta* 27(1988):23–29.

Rarely, the Virgin Mary may be depicted winged also, but this is generally late and developed perhaps under the influence of the iconography of the winged Christ; see *RBK* III:108. Furthermore, the Angeloi family in the Palaiologan period depicted themselves with wings on coins as a kind of heraldic emblem, and also perhaps to invoke angelic protection; see T. Bertelè, *L’imperatore alato nella numismatica bizantina* (Rome, 1951) 45ff.



Figure 3. Sarigüzel sarcophagus, Archaeological Museum, Istanbul (#5408), late fourth century. Photo: Istanbul Archaeological Museum.

casional need to distinguish these beings iconographically from humanity, including Christ incarnate, was important for the creation of angels' iconography. Angelic beings are distinct from, and servile to, Christ, and they do not participate in human nature. Consequently, the winged, anthropomorphic form became a unique sign for the innumerable, invisible entities that mediate between heaven and earth at God's behest.

The iconographic formulae used to depict angelic beings were derived from pagan models. An important example of this derivation is the late fourth-century Sarigüzel sarcophagus in the Archaeological Museum in Istanbul (fig. 3). It shows both the dependence of Christian angels on pagan figures, in particular winged victories, and also the distinctions between the Christian and pagan beings.²⁰ On the Sarigüzel sarcophagus, two flying male angels, clad in tunic and *palium*, bear a wreath containing Christ's monogram ("XP"). The pagan iconography of two horizontal winged beings holding a wreath, medallion or inscribed plaque clearly motivated the disposition of the angels on the Sarigüzel sarcophagus. For instance, on a third-century sarcophagus from the via Aurelia Antica now in the Palazzo

20. See N. Firatlı, *La sculpture byzantine figurée au Musée Archéologique d'Istanbul* (Paris, 1990) no. 81.

dei Conservatori, Rome, two winged female figures hover horizontally and hold a medallion between them in a manner common in pagan funerary art.²¹

Nevertheless, individual elements used in depictions of Christian angels belie any generalizations about unmediated transmission of iconography from pagan to Christian art.²² Pagan figures, such as nikes and personifications, are invariably female; Christian angels, male. In Greek, “ho angelos” (ὁ ἄγγελος) is masculine in gender, a distinction always followed in iconography; hence the distinction in dress. The angels on the Sarigüzel sarcophagus wear tunic and *pallium*, while nikes wear the female *peplos*, and, in other cases, the chiton, occasionally with one breast exposed.²³

Gender and dress, therefore, constitute the essential identifying features for nike and angel, and the distinctions of nature and function are nowhere more evident than on monuments with both figures. The ivory leaf from the late fifth-/early sixth-century Barberini diptych (Louvre, Paris) shows a female, chiton-clad victory accompanying the emperor; in the register above, two male winged figures wearing tunic and *pallium* bear aloft a medallion containing the unbearded Christ (fig. 4).²⁴

The pagan iconography provided some of the meaning of the Christian iconography of victory proclaiming angels. The pagan nikes signal worldly acclaim and, in such contexts as the sarcophagus from the via Aurelia Antica, laud the achievements of the

21. See Berefelt, *A Study on the Winged Angel*, fig. 15.

22. For instance, O. Wulff, *Altchristliche und byzantinische Kunst* (Munich, 1914) 136, A. C. M. Beck, *Genien und Niken als Engel in der altchristlichen Kunst* (Giessen, 1936), and E. Panofsky, *Tomb Sculpture. Its Changing Aspects from Ancient Egypt to Bernini*, ed. H. W. Janson (London, 1964) 43–44: “Victories could become angels without changing in appearance.”

23. G. Stuhlfauth, *Die Engel in der altchristlichen Kunst* (Freiburg, 1897) 242ff.; K. Felis, “Die Niken und die Engel in altchristlicher Kunst,” *RQ* 26(1912):3–25; and see Bussagli, *Storia degli angeli*, 63ff. and 142ff.

24. See R. Delbrueck, *Die Consulardiptychen und verwandte Denkmäler*, 2 vols. (Berlin and Leipzig, 1929) I:188ff., II: pl. 48, and F. de' Maffei, “Tradizione ed innovazione nei ditucci eburnei: Giuliano, Pulcheria, Giustiniano,” *Rivista degli Studi Orientali* 40(1986):129ff. Pallados, writing ca. 400, implies a self-conscious, artistic coexistence for angels and nikes when he describes some painted, Christian nikes. See *The Greek Anthology*, ed. W. R. Paton, 5 vols. (London, 1927), V:282.



Figure 4. Barberini Diptych, Louvre, Paris, sixth century. Photo: Musée du Louvre.

deceased. In distinction, the Christian iconography attempted to demonstrate the universal claims of that faith. Winged angels demonstrate the metaphysical dimension of Christianity and, on the Sarigüzel sarcophagus, its victory over death. The angels are the otherworldly heralds of the triumph of Christ throughout the universe and are the celestial counterparts to the saints on the end panels of that sarcophagus.

Other pagan personifications besides nikes played a role in the development of the iconography of Christian angels. A common iconographic feature to mark creatures that occupied the intermediate zone between the heavens and earth, wings were attributes of numerous personifications, such as winds, psychopompic figures, souls and astronomical symbols. Christian art assimilated this widespread motif to denote angels' immaterial and superhuman nature.²⁵ For example, set within a swirling carpet of fruits, plants and birds, four angels hold aloft a medallion containing the Lamb of God in the mosaic of the chancel vault of San Vitale (consecrated 548).²⁶ Although distinguished by gender and dress, the angels owe their disposition and activity to representations of seasons in late Roman art. For example, winged, female personifications of seasons are depicted in the Late Antique period in mosaics from Daphne, near Antioch, (fig. 5) and Halicarnassus.²⁷ These personifications of seasons, with

25. On this question of pagan winged beings generally, see the studies of Bussagli, *Storia degli angeli*, and "Gli angeli e i venti: considerazioni sul simbolismo aereo delle ali angeliche," *Arte medievalia* 5(1991):107ff. Even birds may have influenced the iconography of the angels; and, in fact, bird-footed angels on a Palaiologan icon (#157) in the Byzantine Museum, Athens, show that an iconographic assimilation of birds and angels was at least possible. See M. G. Soteriou, "Αμύπρόσωπος εικών τοῦ Βυζαντινοῦ Μουσείου Ἀθηνῶν ἐκ τοῦ Ἡπειροῦ," *DChAE* 4(1959):137, fig. 54.

26. See H. Maguire, *Earth and Ocean. The Terrestrial World in Early Byzantine Art* (University Park and London, 1987) 76ff.

27. W.R. Lethaby, "The Painted Book of Genesis in the British Museum," *Archaeological Journal* 69(1912):94, cites a mosaic of the four seasons from Halicarnassus in the British Museum that shows winged female figures wearing tunics; see R.P. Hinks, *Catalogue of the Greek, Etruscan and Roman Paintings and Mosaics in the British Museum* (London, 1933) 127ff. (#51 c-d). And for the fourth-century mosaic from Daphne, now in the Louvre, see A. Grabar, *Early Christian Art. From the Rise of Christianity to the Death of Theodosius*, trans. S. Gilbert and J. Emmons (New York, 1968) fig. 163. Seasons were also depicted as males in pagan art; on an early third-century sarcophagus (Landgraffmuseum, Cassel), and on a sarcophagus dating ca. 300–320 (Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, D.C.), the seasons are winged nude males. See, respectively, J. Godwin, *Mystery Religions in the Ancient World*, San Francisco, 1981, fig. 100, and G.M.A. Hanfmann, *The Season Sarcophagus in Dumbarton Oaks*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, Mass., 1951). Seasons became a significant element in Roman imperial art in the second century, when they were depicted as young males below the female Victories in the spandrels of the triumphal arch of Trajan at Benevento (114–18); see D. Kleiner, *Roman Sculpture* (New Haven and London, 1992) figs. 188, 189, and Hanfmann, *The Season Sarcophagus*, I:171ff. Wings are found subsequently on personifications of seasons in the second century for the first time; Hanfmann, *The Season Sarcophagus*, I:136. And since seasons are also found on sarcophagi from the second century on, an assimilation of



Figure 5. Mosaic of the Seasons, detail of Personification of Spring, from Daphne near Antioch, Louvre, Paris, early fourth century. Photo: Musée du Louvre.

arms raised to hold a medallion, clearly influenced the handling of the angels in the chancel vault at San Vitale. Based on this existing iconography, the angels within this area of the church form part of

the nude male figures with the winged and clothed female victories, such as is found on Trajan's arch, may well have resulted in the Late Antique examples of personifications of time found at Aphrodisias, Halicarnassus and ultimately in the Cotton Genesis.

the mosaic program in the sanctuary, the rule of Christ over the entire earth.

The dependence of the iconography of Christian angels on pagan models is complex, and certain pagan models maintained their identities in Christian art and did not influence the angels' iconography in any simple or direct manner. For example, the late fifth-century Cotton Genesis includes representations of both personifications and angels. Dress and gender distinguish the personifications of the days in the creation pages from the angels in such narrative scenes as Abraham entertaining the three angels.²⁸ The former are female and wear garlands in their hair and high girdled chitons that leave their arms bare; the angels in the Philoxenia, on the other hand, are male and wear purple and gold chlamys with a silver tablion over a white tunic.

Yet the identity of these winged figures in the creation pages is still debated by scholars. The figures are often called angels by scholars, despite the clear iconographic distinctions the illuminator made between the figures in the creation pages and in the narrative scenes; for this reason, it is useful to examine the literature on these figures to see the reasoning behind their designation as angels. In 1959, Marie-Thérèse D'Alverny published an article in which she examined the exegetical history of angels in creation, and discerned an affinity between the commentary of Augustine (354–430) on Genesis and the representations of the winged figures in the creation pages of the Cotton Genesis.²⁹ Augustine stated that the creation of light was also the moment of creation for the angels, and so the angels are intellectual creatures, days of creation in his view, who witness and glorify the creations of God. From this exegesis, D'Alverny hypothesized that the winged figures in the Cotton Genesis illuminations,

28. See K. Weitzmann and H. L. Kessler, *The Cotton Genesis. British Museum Codex Cotton Otho B.VI* (Princeton, 1986) 40, 48 (creation pages), 79–80 (Abraham).

Angels are depicted as men in the scene of Jacob's Dream in the third-century fresco in the synagogue at Dura Europos; as in the Cotton Genesis, the psyches are kept distinct from the angels iconographically as they are depicted as small winged females. See K. Weitzmann and H. L. Kessler, *The Frescoes of the Dura Europos Synagogue and Christian Art* (Washington, D.C., 1990) 17ff., fig. 10, and 135ff., fig. 178, respectively.

29. M.-Th. D'Alverny, "Les anges et les jours," *CA* 9(1957):271–300.

who increase in number according to the day of creation, find a direct parallel in this unique exegesis of Genesis by Augustine.³⁰ For this reason, she called them angels.

D'Alverny made an exhaustive survey of the textual tradition of creation and angels, but neglected to specify the iconographic precedents for the winged beings in the creation pages. Furthermore, she accepted the traditional provenance of the Cotton Genesis at Alexandria, and so ran aground on the relation of Augustinian exegesis to a Greek manuscript manufactured in Egypt. Maria Marini Clarelli has offered an hypothesis that attempts to reconcile this provenance with an exegetical tradition.³¹ She proposed that the winged females are angels assimilated to the iconography of pagan psyches; psyches in this view were a fundamental influence on the development of angels' iconography. The winged figures in these illustrations of the Cotton Genesis are, for this reason, depicted wearing chitons, unlike the standard angelic dress of dalmatian and *pallium*, in order to state iconographically the connection between soul and angel.³² However, psyches have butterfly wings in pagan iconography, and the winged figures in the Cotton Genesis creation pages have small sickle-shaped wings; the iconographic parallel is not, therefore, convincing.³³

30. References in D'Alverny, "Les anges et les jours," 273ff.

31. See M. V. Marini Clarelli, "I giorni della creazione nel 'Genesi Cotton,'" *OCP* 50(1984):65–93; and Bussagli, *Storia degli angeli*, 72ff.

32. Marini Clarelli, "I giorni della creazione nel 'Genesi Cotton,'" 83ff. She attributed this assimilation to exegesis current at Alexandria in the early Christian period, particularly that of Philo (ca. 20 B.C.E.–ca. 50 C.E.) and Clement (ca. 150–ca. 215). According to the exegesis of Clement of Alexandria, the souls of the just participate in a journey of progressive refinement that leads ultimately to an essential assimilation with the seven first-created angels.

33. An apparent strength of Marini Clarelli's hypothesis is a better contextualization of the manuscript in Alexandria, but Martin Büchsel has recently examined further the Augustinian exegesis on creation with regard to the Cotton Genesis. See M. Büchsel, "Die Schöpfungsmaischen von San Marco. Die Ikonographie der Erschaffung des Menschen in der frühchristlichen Kunst," *Städels-Jahrbuch* n.s. 13(1991):29–80. Büchsel discerned elements in the creation cycle in the thirteenth-century mosaic program of San Marco, Venice, which is derived from the Cotton Genesis, that are found only in the work of Augustine; this extensive examination advances further the hypothesis of a connection between the Cotton Genesis and Augustine. He also proposed a provenance for the manuscript at Rome, thus taking away an important underpinning of Marini Clarelli's argument and adding strength to the original connection made between Augustine and the Cotton Genesis by D'Alverny. How-

While the manuscript was likely produced in Egypt, either at Alexandria or at Antinoë, the exegetical sources Marini Clarelli adduces have no discernible impact on the invention of the creation day pages.³⁴ Moreover, the iconographic parallels between pagan personifications of days and the winged figures in the creation pages are the most compelling. For example, a panel from a first-century (?) frieze in the north portico of the imperial Sebasteion at Aphrodisias in Asia Minor depicts a personification of Day (*Ημέρα*). The panel shows a woman clad in a high girdled chiton in a manner similar to the winged figures in the creation day pages of the Cotton Genesis.³⁵ The dress, wings and gender of these personifications show the best precedents for the winged figures in the creation day pages of the Cotton Genesis.³⁶ As the Cotton Genesis has other instances of classical borrowings, the most likely solution to the puzzle of the so-called “angels” is the simplest; pagan personifications of time were included to indicate the increase in days of creation as outlined in Genesis.³⁷

ever, the problem of a Greek manuscript produced at Rome but with palaeographic relations to Alexandria (as Büchsel admits) is not dissipated by Büchsel’s hypothesis that the manuscript was a gift from Leo the Great (d. 461) to a Byzantine emperor. The argument for Alexandrian origin, on palaeographic and iconographic grounds, is still the most compelling for this manuscript. See H. L. Kessler, *Studies in Pictorial Narrative* (London, 1994) 552.

34. See Weitzmann / Kessler, *The Cotton Genesis*, 30–31, who contend that palaeographic, stylistic and iconographic evidence points to either of these major Egyptian centers.

35. See K. T. Erim, *Aphrodisias. Ein Führer durch die antike Stadt und das Museum*, trans. E. Alföldi-Rosenbaum (Istanbul, 1990) fig. 90; and also his *Aphrodisias. City of Venus-Aphrodite* (New York and London, 1986) fig. p. 122; and R. R. R. Smith, “Myth and Allegory in the Sebasteion,” *Aphrodisias Papers. Recent Work on Architecture and Sculpture*, ed. C. Rouché and K. T. Erim (Ann Arbor, 1990) 89–92. On the iconography of Day, see *Lexicon iconographicum mythologiae classicae* (Zurich and Munich, 1981–) III, 1:774 (#276, #282), 781 (#299).

36. See K. Weitzmann, “Observations on the Cotton Genesis Fragments,” in *Late Classical and Mediaeval Studies in Honor of Albert Mathias Friend, Jr.*, ed. K. Weitzmann et al. (Princeton, 1955) 127, in which he played down the possibility of the personification of day affecting the manuscript; in “The Genesis Mosaics of San Marco and the Cotton Genesis Miniatures,” in O. Demus, *The Mosaics of San Marco. Part 2: The Thirteenth Century. Volume One: Text* (Chicago and London, 1984) 109, Weitzmann entertained *Ημέρα* as the more likely influence.

37. On other classical borrowings in the Cotton Genesis, see Weitzmann / Kessler, *The Cotton Genesis*, 38ff.

The figures in the creation pages of the Cotton Genesis are plainly different from the angels in the other illustrations of the manuscript, and the differences in identities signal to the viewer that a visual gloss is being made on the creation passages. The winged figures in the creation pages allow an indication of time, thereby revealing an ability on the part of the illuminator to express certain Christian concerns through a pagan iconography. Pagan personifications of time were not direct models for the iconography of angels since figures are differentiated in function and appearance in the Cotton Genesis. The distinctions used reveal that while the iconography of angels owed some debts to pagan models as at San Vitale, Christian painters also perceived differences in these figures and maintained these differences for specific narrative ends.³⁸

Despite the clear iconographic parallels between winged pagan beings and Christian angels, some scholars have sought the origins of the winged angel in a purely Christian context independent of pagan inspiration. In support of this opinion, Georg Stuhlfauth adduced as an early example a fifth-century ivory (Castello Sforzesco, Milan), which depicts a winged man and bull, symbols of the evangelists, hovering above an unwinged angel at the tomb of Christ (fig. 6).³⁹ He also cited the apse mosaic at Sta. Pudenziana, Rome, (401–417) in which evangelist symbols hover in the sky above Christ seated amongst his disciples. These two monuments were his primary pieces of evidence for the contention that the Christian iconography of winged angels was dependent on the evangelist symbol of the winged man.⁴⁰ However, chronology makes it difficult to support an

38. Hanfmann, *The Season Sarcophagus*, I:195ff., believed that little evidence existed for a true iconographic lineage from seasons to angels: "At most, we might allow that the tendency to conceive natural forces as angels and *daimones*, coupled with the use of pagan types of personifications for the visual rendering of these concepts, led to an art in which some of the long-winged Seasons have a generic resemblance to the Christian angels."

39. Grabar, *The Golden Age of Justinian*, fig. 331, and Volbach, *Elfenbeinarbeiten*, pl. 60 (#111).

40. Stuhlfauth, *Die Engel in der altchristlichen Kunst*, 244. The tetramorph cherubim of Ezekiel and Revelation initiated typological interpretation of the Gospels and Evangelists among Christian theologians. This symbolic affiliation of tetramorph and Gospels began as early as the second century; for instance, Irenaeus (ca. 130–ca. 200) wrote: "For the cherubim have four faces, and their faces are the images of the dispensation of the Son of

Figure 6. The Tomb of Christ, upper register—Soldiers Asleep at the Tomb; lower register—Marys and Angel at Tomb. Ivory, Castello Sforzesco, Milan, fifth century. Photo: Foto Marburg / Art Resource, N.Y.



independent development of this iconography since these earliest monuments are later than the fourth-century appearance of winged angels.⁴¹

Given the fragmentary quality of the archaeological record for this period, the hypothesis of a Christian invention of the iconography of the winged angel cannot be dismissed out of hand. Furthermore, scripture does provide the material for an association of man and wings, for instance in Ezekiel (1:5–6) and Revelation (4:7–8), and early exegetical identification of tetramorph and evangelists suggests—though by no means proves—an equally early appearance in art. Scripture mentions wings and flight at Exodus 25:20, Daniel 9:21, Revelation 14:6, for instance, and descriptions elsewhere make it clear that wings were means for mobility for the cherubim and seraphim. Wings were also symbols of God's unapproachability. For instance, Isaiah's seraphim use two of their wings for flying, and the other two pairs to cover their face and feet (Is. 6:1–3). And third- and fourth-century exegesis by theologians such as Tertullian (ca. 160–ca. 240)⁴² and Chrysostom makes it clear that Christians viewed and discussed wings as symbols of the

God. The one like the lion indicates the efficacious, royal and authoritative nature. The one like the calf presents the sacerdotal and priestly nature. The manlike form depicts the incarnation, and the one like the eagle represents the visitation of the Holy Spirit." Trans. R. S. Nelson, *The Iconography of the Prefaces in Byzantine Gospels* (New York, 1980) 6. See also O. Wulff, *Cherubim, Throne und Seraphim. Ikonographie der ersten Engelshierarchie in der christlichen Kunst* (Altenburg, 1894) 8ff., 37ff.; M. de Groot and P. van Moorsel, "The Lion, the Calf, the Man and the Eagle in Early Christian and Coptic Art," *Bulletin Antieke Beschaving* 52/3 (1977/8):233–45; M. Werner, "On the Origin of Zoanthropomorphic Evangelist Symbols: The Early Christian Background," *Studies in Iconography* 10 (1984–1986): 1–35, and also "On the Origin of Zoanthropomorphic Evangelist Symbols: The Early Medieval and Later Coptic, Nubian, Ethiopian and Latin Evidence," *ibid.* 13 (1989–1990): 1–47; and D. Kinney, "The Apocalypse in Early Christian Monumental Decoration," in *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, ed. R. K. Emerson and B. McGinn (Ithaca and London, 1992) 200–16.

41. See Kinney, "The Apocalypse in Early Christian Monumental Decoration," 208ff.

42. *Apologeticum adversus gentes pro Christianis*, XXII, 8, in *Tertulliani Opera. Pars I. Opera Catholica, Adversus Marcionem*. Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina, vol. 1, ed. E. Dekkers (Turnhout, 1954) 129: "Every spirit is winged, both angels and demons. In this way, in a moment they are everywhere: all the world is for them one place; what is taking place everywhere is as easy for them to know as to tell. It is thought that their velocity is divine, because their substance is not known."

angels' transcendental nature.⁴³ These texts reveal that Christians were able to provide their own meanings to angels' wings, and they must have encouraged the manipulation of the iconography of pagan winged beings and made such an iconography acceptable in Christian contexts. In the final analysis, the evidence for a Christian invention of the winged angels is simply too scanty and the influence of pagan iconography too manifest for pagan art to be discounted as the primary model for angels.

Although the debt that Christian iconography owed pagan models is clear, Christian painters and mosaicists were able to judge the appropriateness of depictions of winged figures and did not simply absorb an existing iconography. The addition or omission of wings in depictions of angels in Christian art likewise reveals a symbolic quality of wings and the ability of these appendages to signal terrestrial or celestial modes or sites of activity. Anthropomorphic figures, winged or unwinged, could help express orthodox dogma, as well as Christian interpretations of scripture not overt in Hebrew scripture itself.

Christian painters and mosaicists sometimes contended with the problems of apprehension and description of angels in art, and in this way paralleled the attempts of theologians who were concerned with deciphering the meanings behind the obscure appearances of angels in scripture, particularly in the Hebrew Testament. The appearance of the angels of the Lord as "men" to Abraham (Gen. 18) has an important iconographic history from this point of view. Ambiguities present in the account are difficult to reconcile; within the same chapter, the angels are described as "men," "he" and the "Lord." The Greek fathers offered various interpretations of the puzzling appearance of the angels to Abraham at Mamre: simply as three angels, Christ and two angels, or as the Trinity itself.⁴⁴

43. See also Bussagli, *Storia degli angeli*, 57ff.; Stuhlfauth, *Die Engel in der altchristlichen Kunst*, 51ff.; *Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie*, ed. F. Cabrol and H. Leclercq (Paris, 1924–) I, 2:2080ff.; and the *Martyrium Bartholomaei* in *Acta apostolorum apocrypha*, ed. C. Tischendorf (Leipzig, 1861) 257.

44. See, for instance, Justin Martyr (ca. 100–ca. 165), *Dialogus cum Tryphone Judaeo*, 59, J. Archimbault, ed., *Justin. Dialogue avec Tryphon*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1909) 276, J. Goodspeed, *Die ältesten Apologeten* (Göttingen, 1915; rp. New York, 1950) 164; Athanasius (ca. 296–373), *Orationes contra Arianos*, PG 26:352AB; and Procopius of Gaza (ca. 475–ca. 538), *Comment-*

Painters and mosaicists also offered various visual interpretations of the true meaning behind this Old Testament epiphany. The first extant example of a representation of the epiphany to Abraham, a fresco in the fourth-century via Latina Catacomb in Rome, simply depicts three young men approaching the seated Abraham.⁴⁵ The painter did not overtly signal the identity of the three men by iconography or inscription. The angels are unwinged, in keeping with the earthly nature of their manifestation to Abraham. The viewer can interpret the fresco literally as describing in a direct fashion the three men who appeared to Abraham; on the other hand, the viewer can infer the spiritual nature of the visitors in the fresco through knowledge of scripture.

In contrast to this literal representation of the three men of the scriptural passage, the mosaicist at Sta. Maria Maggiore, Rome, (ca. 435) offered a more complicated visual exegesis. The middle angel appears in a transparent aureole of light that overlaps and excludes the two flanking angels. By singling out one figure as more powerful and divine than his companions, the mosaicist has signified a Christological interpretation of this epiphany.⁴⁶ The appearance of the “men” to Abraham and Sarah at Mamre is also a typology of the Annunciation to the Virgin. Traditionally, the scene in the upper left-hand portion of the arch mosaic has been interpreted as an Annunciation to the Virgin; in this scene, an angel descends from the sky to announce the news to an enthroned Mary. The angels flanking the Virgin and the angel descending are all shown winged, in distinction to the angels in the Philoxenia scene who are depicted without wings. In providing wings to the angels with the Virgin, the

tarii in *Genesim*, XVIII, PG 87/1:364AB. These various interpretations have been examined more broadly by L. Thunberg, “Early Christian Interpretations of the Three Angels in Gen. 18,” *Studia Patristica* 8(1966):560–70.

45. See A. Ferrua, *La pittura della nuova Catacomba di via Latina*, Vatican City, 1960, fig. 24.

46. See C. Cecchelli, *I mosaici della Basilica S. Maria Maggiore* (Turin, 1956) pl. XV, O. Perler, “Les théophanies dans les mosaïques de Sainte-Marie-Majeure à Rome,” *RivAC* 50(1974):281ff., B. Brenk, *Die frühchristliche Mosaiken in S. Maria Maggiore zu Rom* (Wiesbaden, 1975) 108ff., and also W. Loerke, “Observations on the Representation of *Doxa* in the Mosaics of S. Maria Maggiore, Rome, and St. Catherine’s, Sinai,” *Gesta* 20(1981):18ff.

mosaicist signifies the overtly spiritual nature of this Annunciation and the eternal setting of the Virgin's court. In contrast, the wingless angels before Abraham and Sarah literally signal the terrestrial quality of that epiphany; the singling out of the central angel reveals that the latent meaning of this appearance is believed to lie in its prophecy of the coming of Christ.⁴⁷

Unlike the mosaicist of the Philoxenia at Sta. Maria Maggiore, the illustrator of the Cotton Genesis chose to depict the angels in the same scene with wings.⁴⁸ The wings, not mentioned in the account, signal to the viewer the identity of Abraham's visitors; believing his visitors to be simply three strangers, Abraham has not yet apprehended that they are angels. Again unlike the case at Sta. Maria Maggiore, the illuminator did not distinguish the angels one from another, and may have wished to express the Trinitarian symbolism often given the event by Christians. Indeed, this same typological interpretation determined other aspects of the manuscript's iconographic program, such as the portrayal of Christ as Logos in the creation pages; in orthodox belief, Christ is co-eternal and consubstantial with God and the Holy Spirit, and by showing Christ at creation, the illuminator stressed this crucial aspect of Trinitarian dogma.⁴⁹

These monuments do not trace a development of an iconography that becomes increasingly settled over the first centuries of Christian art. For example, the sixth-century mosaic of the Philoxenia at San Vitale, Ravenna, also depicts the angels as young, wingless men (fig. 7). The angels are represented seated at table and they indicate the repast Abraham has gathered. Coupled in the same lunette with a depiction of the sacrifice of Isaac, and placed opposite a mosaic of the sacrifices of Abel and Melchizedek, the depiction of the three

47. See S. Spain, "'The Promised Blessing': The Iconography of the Mosaics of S. Maria Maggiore," *ArtB* 61(1979):518–40, especially 537ff.

48. Weitzmann / Kessler, *The Cotton Genesis*, 79–80.

49. See Weitzmann / Kessler, *The Cotton Genesis*, 37, and on the Trinitarian issues of the fourth and fifth centuries and art, see C. von Schönborn, *L'icône du Christ. Fondements théologiques élaborées entre le Ier et le IIer Concile de Nicée (325–787)* (Fribourg, 1976) 22ff.

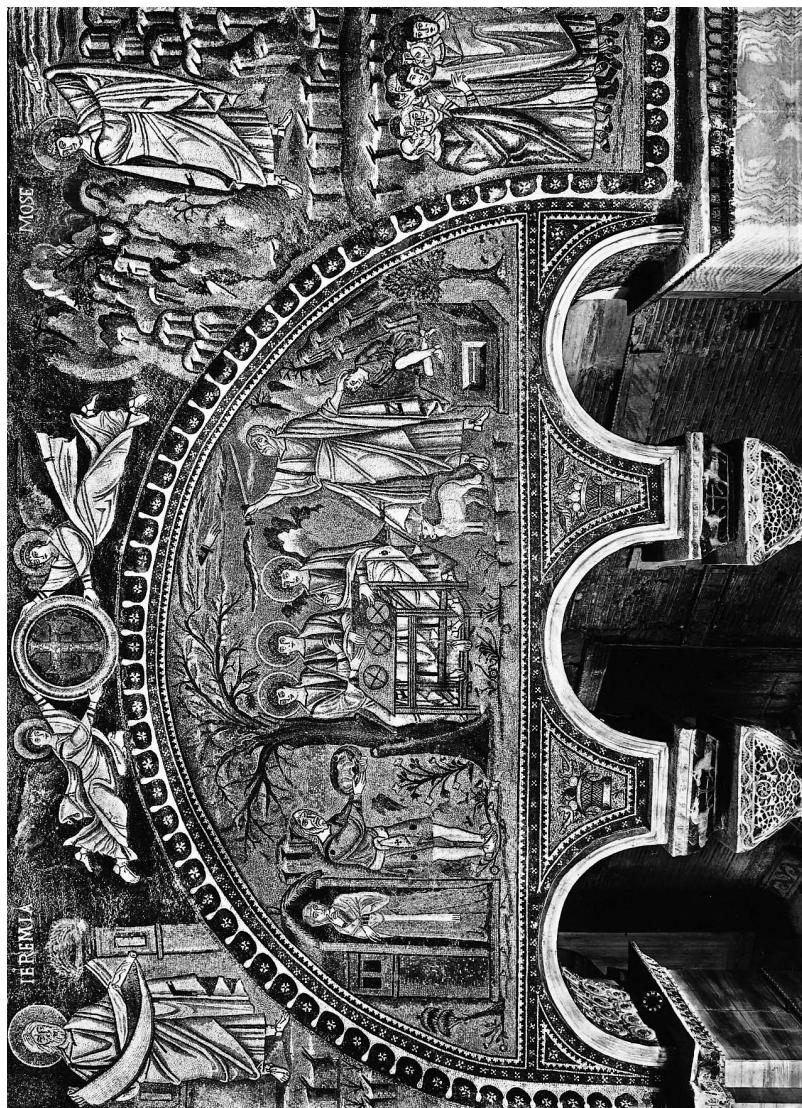


Figure 7. Philoxenia of Abraham, Mosaic, S. Vitale, Ravenna, ca. 540. Photo: Alinari / Art Resource, N.Y.

men from heaven forms part of a program of eucharistic typology in the sanctuary of the church.⁵⁰

As these examples show, Christian painters and mosaicists determined the appropriateness of wings to represent the epiphany made to Abraham according to the context: they often manipulated iconographic elements in order to express specific interpretations of scriptural passages.⁵¹ In the context of the apse program at San Vitale, God's universal dominion is stated; and the attendance of spiritual servants, their spirituality and distinction from human nature signaled by their wings, is a sign of the all-embracing nature of that dominion. And above the apse, the winged angels on the arch further demonstrate the cosmic acclamation of Christ's rule. While these angels derive their wings and horizontal disposition from pagan triumphal imagery, the winged angels in the chancel vault form part of the program's symbolism of the extent of Christ's mastery over the earth; their wings and unworldly appearance symbolize the ubiquity of Christ's dominion. However, the angels in the Philoxenia scene are distinct from the eternal and metaphysical nature of these angels in the chancel vault, apse and on the principal arch. In contrast, they were depicted without wings, and this distinction provides the viewer with a clue as to the temporal nature of that epiphany. Possi-

50. RBK I:18, and O. von Simson, *Sacred Fortress. Byzantine Art and Statecraft in Ravenna*, 2d ed. (Chicago, 1976) 25. On the question of this scene's relation to the anti-Arian beliefs of the Byzantine conquerors, see R. Sörries, *Die Bilder der Orthodoxen im Kampf gegen den Arianismus. Eine Apologie der orthodoxen Christologie und Trinitätslehre gegenüber der arianischen Häresie dargestellt an den ravenattischen Mosaiken und Bildern des 6. Jahrhunderts* (Bern, 1983) 161ff. And on the iconography of the Trinity, see J. Engemann, "Zu den Dreifaltigkeit darstellungen der frühchristlichen Kunst: Gab es in 4. Jahrhundert anthropomorphe Trinitätsbilder?" *JAC* 19 (1976):157–72.

51. Similarly, in the sixth-century Vienna Genesis, as well, the illustration of the calling of Abraham depicts a winged angel descending from the sky (fol. 11r), while Jacob wrestles with a wingless angel on another folio (24r). K. Clausberg, *Die Wiener Genesis. Eine Kunsthistorische Bilderbuchgeschichte* (Frankfurt am Main, 1984) 13, figs. 44 and 8, respectively.

It ought to be noted that the iconography of wingless angels is found as late as the Palaiologan period, for instance, in an icon of the Virgin and Child in the Museo di San Georgio degli Greci in Venice, in which a group of wingless angels clusters in the upper left corner. See N. V. Drandakes, "Παλαιολόγειος εἰκών Βρεφοκρατούσης τοῦ εἰς Βενετίου Ἑλληνικοῦ ναοῦ, Θεολογία" 28 (1957):244, figs. 1, 2 and 5.

bly as foreshadowings of the Trinity and the eucharistic sacrifice, the Philoxenia is depicted literally. The scene's latent meanings are not indicated by the iconographic attributes of the other angels' transcendental guise. The program at San Vitale demonstrates that different modes of presentation of angels can describe their changeable nature and areas of activity.

The iconography of the winged youth, used in these cases just discussed to symbolize otherworldly nature and activity, was used for other angelic beings as well. Scripture mentions other angelic creatures besides archangels and angels, and these led to the depiction of other ranks of an angelic hierarchy.⁵² Yet, because of the lack of full descriptions in scripture of the members of this hierarchy, the iconography of the winged youth was employed to represent any angelic being. The use of this symbolic iconography must have originated at an early point in the creation of a Christian iconography of angels. Methodius of Olympus (d. ca. 311) provided a precedent for extant representations in his description of an image figured with "likenesses fashioned from gold of his angels, who are the Principalities and the Powers, [which] we make in honour and faith in him."⁵³ Paralleling Methodius' description, examples of images survive in which the winged youth serves as a sign for different angelic orders. A seventh-century Constantinopolitan cameo (#119) from the collection of Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, D.C., bears the inscription "ΕΞΟΤCIE" ("Powers"), and depicts two winged men (fig. 8).⁵⁴

52. See Colossians 1:16 and Ephesians 1:21. Scripture mentions nine orders in total: seraphim (Is. 6), cherubim (Gen. 3:24, Ex. 25:22), thrones (Col. 1:16), virtues (Eph. 1:21), dominations, principalities, powers (Eph. 1:21, Col. 1:16), archangels (1 Thess. 4:16, Jude 9), angels (Gen. 16:7, for example).

53. Preserved in the writings of John of Damascus, *Orationes de imaginibus tres*, III. 138, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos. III Contra imaginum calumniatores orationes tres*, PTS vol. 17, ed. P. B. Kotter (Berlin, 1975) 200.

54. M. C. Ross, *Catalogue of the Byzantine and Early Mediaeval Antiquities in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection. Volume One. Metalwork, Ceramics, Glass, Glyptics, Painting* (Washington, D.C., 1962) 98–99, fig. 57. This iconography continues to be used throughout the Byzantine period. For example, among the fifteenth-century frescoes of the church of the Metropolitan at Mistra, the angelic orders are collectively described by winged men, that is, the angel type; see G. Millet, *Monuments byzantins de Mistra* (Paris, 1910) pl. 64.1.

Figure 8. Two winged men inscribed “ΕΞΟΥΣΙΕ” (“Powers”), Constantinopolitan cameo, Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, D.C., seventh century. Photo: Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, D.C.



Faced with a lack of scriptural description—as only the existence of this rank is mentioned—the engraver fell back on this iconography of the winged man; skirting any iconographic complexity or difficulty, the winged man stands in as a generic type.

The mosaics in the bema arch of the destroyed church of the Dormition at Nicaea (Iznik) were an example of this generic iconography of the winged youth within a full-scale program. These original mosaics of the angels have been dated to the late sixth and seventh centuries.⁵⁵ Although the inscriptions state that the figures represented different orders of the angelic hierarchy, the Principalities, Virtues, Dominations and Powers, mentioned together at

55. Fernanda de' Maffei hypothesized that the angelic powers belonged to a different mosaic phase than the Virgin and Child and that they date stylistically to the late sixth century. For this dating, she sought support in the stylistic analysis of G. de Francovich, “I mosaici del bema della chiesa della Dormizione di Nicea,” in *Scritti di storia dell’arte in onore di Lionello Venturi*, 2 vols. (Rome, 1956) I: 3–27. She conjectured that the mosaics had been covered during Iconoclasm, not erased as is generally thought, and the repair evident is not connected to the restoration of images in 843. See F. de' Maffei, “L’Unigenito consostanziale al Padre nel programma trinitario dei perduti mosaici del bema della Dormizione di Nicea e il Cristo trasfigurato del Sinai I,” *Storia dell’arte* 45(1982):91ff., and also her *Icona, pittore e arte al Concilio Niceno II* (Rome, 1974) 99ff. However, the restorations apparent in the areas around the angels and the replacing of the cross in the apse likely belong to the same phase,

Colossians 1:16, the angelic beings were depicted as identical winged youths wearing the *loros* and carrying orbs and standards (figs. 9, 10). Scripture is the primary source for revelation of these divine beings but only the existence of the angels, the Principalities, Virtues, Dominations and Powers, are attested in scripture, not any of their individual qualities. Lacking specific scriptural description, the mosaicists repeated the iconographic type, the winged youth. The angels are nominally different from one another but they share the same nature generally, and they are visually indistinguishable from one another.

Other angelic powers are also represented by an anthropomorphic figure with wings, even the cherubim and seraphim for which extensive scriptural descriptions could be drawn upon. Passages describing the Ark of the Covenant and the Solomonic Temple provide information on representations of cherubim (for example, Ex. 37:7–9, I Kings 6:23–28, Ez. 41:18–20); and the prophets' visions supplied long, if obscure, descriptions of angels. Yet anthropomorphism was used in early Byzantine art to represent these angelic beings in contradiction of scriptural accounts of these angels' appearances. For example, in the sixth-century Vienna Genesis (fol. 2v), a winged man represents the cherubim guarding the gates of paradise with a flaming sword (Gen. 3:24); this winged man diverges from Ezekiel's full description of the cherubim as a six-winged tetramorph (1:4–28,

probably post 843, paid for by the otherwise unknown Naukratios, as stated in an inscription between the two angels on the south bema arch.

The precise date of the original foundation by Hyacinthos is not settled. Most scholars prefer the late seventh/early eighth century for the construction of the church and, following this, the mosaics in the apse area. See F.I. Schmit, *Die Koimesis-Kirche von Nikaia, das Bauwerk und die Mosaiken* (Berlin and Leipzig, 1927), U. Peschlow, "Neue Beobachtungen zur Architektur und Ausstattung der Koimesiskirche in Iznik," *Istanbuler Mitteilungen* 22(1972):145–87, and C. Barber, "The Koimesis Church, Nicaea: The Limits of Representation on the Eve of Iconoclasm," *JöB* 41(1991):43–60. However, arguments have been made, through comparisons of sculptural decoration in the church, that the foundation dates to the second half of the sixth century. See C. Barsanti, "Una nota sulle sculture del Tempio di Giacinto nella Chiesa della Dormizione (Koimesis) di Iznik-Nicea," *Storia dell'arte* 46(1982):210–18, and C. Mango, *Byzantine Architecture* (London, 1986) 90. Mango has added his voice more recently to the number of scholars who call for a date around 700. See his "Notes d'épigraphie et d'archéologie: Constantinople, Nicée," *TM* 12(1994):350ff.



Figure 9. Angelic Powers, south side, Bema Mosaic (destroyed), Church of the Dormition, Iznik (formerly Nicaea), ninth century. Photo: Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, D.C.

10:12).⁵⁶ And, despite Isaiah's revelation (6:1–3), the seraphim were also depicted as winged men in early representations, for example,

56. This anthropomorphic iconography never entirely disappears; see the thirteenth-century sculpted façade of the Church of Hagia Sophia, Trebizond, where an anthropomorphic cherubim guards paradise. See D. Talbot Rice et al., *The Church of Hagia Sophia at Trebizond* (Edinburgh, 1968) 48, pl. 17d.



Figure 10. Angelic Powers, north side, Bema Mosaic (destroyed), Church of the Dormition, Iznik (formerly Nicaea), ninth century. Photo: Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, D.C.

on the entrance gate at the fifth-century complex at Alahan in Seleucia in southeast Asia Minor.⁵⁷

57. See Mary Gough, ed., *Alahan. An Early Christian Monastery in Southeastern Turkey* (Toronto, 1985) 87ff., pl. 20.

Ninth-century examples include the illustration of the appearance of the seraphim as a winged youth to Isaiah in the Vatican “Cosmas Indicopleustes” (Vat. gr. 699, fol. 72v). See

The most exalted members of the hierarchy, the cherubim and seraphim, were most often depicted in Early Christian and Byzantine art in liturgical contexts. Occasionally represented in symbolic form as winged men, despite clear and distinct descriptions in scripture for each creature, cherubim and seraphim also diverge iconographically from scriptural accounts. Christian artists and theologians often used the visions of cherubim and seraphim to express eschatological and cosmological themes. The earliest depiction of the seraphim and the tetramorph cherubim, the fifth-/ sixth-century apse mosaic in the church of Hosios David, Thessalonike, conflates the visions of Ezekiel's cherubim (1:4–28, 10:12), Isaiah's seraphim (6:1–3) and the six-winged creatures of Revelation (4:2–10).⁵⁸ Christ appears in a mandorla, supported by the four creatures of Ezekiel and Revelation. The four beasts each have wings with many eyes; yet no fiery wheels are depicted, while the inscription in the scroll held by Christ quotes Isaiah 25:9.⁵⁹ Christa Ihm has called this iconography at Hosios David the liturgical *maiestas*.⁶⁰

Topographie chrétienne, SC vols. 141, 159, 197, ed. W. Wolska-Conus (Paris, 1968–1973) II:249. See, too, the Reliquary of the True Cross, from Limburg an-der-Lahn, dating in its last reworking to 963, on which the iconography of the four-winged cherubim and the six-winged seraphim applies respectively to the principalities and powers. See J. Rauch, “Die Limburger Staurothek,” *Das Münster* 8(1955):201ff., especially figs. 5, 16–18, and J.M. Wilm, *ibid.*, 234ff., and H. Wilsdorf, “Zur Staurothek vom Limburg,” *BF* 18(1992): 197–208. de' Maffei, “L'Unigenito consustanziale,” 100 n52, cites Gregory of Nyssa on the identification of thrones and powers with seraphim and cherubim (*Refutatio confessionis Eunomii*, PG 45:556C).

58. See C. Ihm, *Die Programme der christlichen Apsismalerei vom vierten Jahrhundert bis zur Mitte des achten Jahrhunderts* (Wiesbaden, 1960) 42ff. On the establishment of the Book of Revelation in the eastern Church, see G. Galavaris, *The Illustrations of the Prefaces in Byzantine Gospels* (Vienna, 1979) 48, especially n49. On Hosios David, see Ihm, *Die Programme*, 182–84, pl. XIII, 1, and T.F. Mathews, *The Clash of Gods. A Reinterpretation of Early Christian Art*, rev. ed. (Princeton, 1999) 115ff.

59. The fifth-/ seventh-century fresco in the apse niche of Chapel XXVI, Bawît, also reveals elements of each of these three visions; although the depiction conforms generally to Ezekiel's vision, the cherubim have six wings, one face, and many eyes as in Isaiah and Revelation, rather than Ezekiel's four-winged, four-faced creatures with hands and feet. See Ihm, *Die Programme*, 202–203, pl. XIII, 2. And in the Monastery of Dodo, David-Garedja, Georgia, dating to the seventh/ninth century, two archangels, Michael and Gabriel, flank the enthroned Christ, while two tetramorphs hover underneath. The tetramorphs have four faces and four wings, and they are standing on fiery wheels, referring to Ezekiel, while a Trisagion inscription recalls Isaiah and the liturgy. See Ihm, *Die Programme*, pl. XIV, 2, and

The Trisagion, the “Holy, holy, holy” chanted by the seraphim in Isaiah (6:3) and Revelation (4:8), influenced the representations of cherubim and seraphim in artistic milieux strongly influenced by liturgical practice.⁶¹ The liturgy also encouraged a certain amount of

A. Alpago-Novello et al., *Art and Architecture in Medieval Georgia*, trans. N. Holloway (Louvain-la-Neuve, 1980) 88, figs. 94, 95. And in the crucifixion in the apse of Sta. Maria Antiqua, Rome (705–707), the cherubim and seraphim are identical in that they both have six wings and stand on flaming wheels; see P. Romanelli and P.J. Nordhagen, *S. Maria Antiqua* (Rome, 1964) pls. 22, 23.

In the period following Iconoclasm, the liturgical *maiestas* remained popular, particularly in the monastic setting of the churches of Cappadocia. The fresco in the prothesis apse of the New Church at Tokali Kilise, dating from the middle of the tenth century, is typical of this Cappadocian iconography. See A. Wharton Epstein, *Tokali Kilise. Tenth-century Metropolitan Art in Byzantine Cappadocia* (Washington, D.C., 1986) 68–69, figs. 102, 103. Christ sits enthroned in the middle of the apse, and he is flanked by two pairs of fiery wheels, a seraphim, a cherubim, and two Archangels, Michael and Gabriel. On either side of Christ is an inscription based on the liturgy, “Holy, holy, holy Lord/of Hosts, Heaven and earth are filled with your glory.” The depictions of the seraphim and cherubim generally follow scripture. The seraphim, to Christ’s right, has six eyeless wings, the face of a man in the center of the wings, and hands and feet protruding from the wings; the cherubim has the heads of an ox and a lion to either side, and a man’s head in the middle of four many-eyed wings. Inscriptions above the seraphim and cherubim provide apocalyptic titles for the beasts, also used in the liturgy, “bellowing” (ΒΩΟΝΤΑ) and “calling” (ΚΕΛΕΤΟΝΤΑ), which are associated with the ox and man figures, respectively.

On the liturgy and the references to the apocalyptic beasts, see F.E. Brightman, “The *Historia Mystagogica* and Other Greek Commentaries on the Byzantine Liturgy,” *JTS* 9(1908):248–67, 387–97; G. de Jerphanion, “Les noms des quatre animaux et le commentaire liturgique de Pseudo-Germain,” in his *Les voix des monuments. Notes et études d’archéologie chrétienne* (Paris, 1930) 250–59; A. Wharton Epstein, “The Problem of Provincialism: Byzantine Monasteries in Cappadocia and Monks in South Italy,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 42(1979):39–40; and Galavaris, *The Illustrations of the Prefaces in Byzantine Gospels*, 86ff.

60. Mathews has raised objections about the imperial connotations of the term *maiestas*, but the liturgical function is stressed here, not the pagan antecedents of the iconography. See Mathews, *The Clash of Gods*, 117.

61. André Grabar noted examples, on the other hand, where Christ is enthroned, with the Trisagion printed on the pages of the book he holds; the cherubim and seraphim are not present in these examples. Grabar stresses the importance of theophanic vision, rather than of liturgical texts, in the formation of the iconography of the *maiestas*. See *Martyrium. Recherches sur le culte des reliques et l’art chrétien antique*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1943–1946; rp. London, 1972) II:306ff. Yet the number of examples cited above indicate that liturgy also played a fundamental part in the formation of this iconography.

The Trisagion appears to be a very early element in piety and liturgy. See V. Saxon, “Jalons pour servir à l’histoire du culte de l’archange Saint Michel en orient jusqu’à l’iconoclasme,” in *Noscere sancta. Miscellanea in memoria di Agostino Amore* (Rome, 1985) 362–63; and, more comprehensively, B.D. Sparks, *The Sanctus in the Eucharistic Prayer* (Cambridge, 1991).

confusion of these two angelic ranks. For example, Christ is addressed in the liturgy:

... for before thee stand thy two living creatures honourable exceedingly, the sixwinged and manyeyed, seraphim and cherubim, with two wings covering their faces by reason of thy godhead which none can gaze on nor comprehend, and with twain covering their feet, with twain also flying....⁶²

The liturgy of John Chrysostom, which mentions “the cherubim, the seraphim, six-winged and many-eyed” (τὰ Χερουβὶμ καὶ τὰ Σεραφὶμ, ἔξαπτέρυγα, πολυόμματα), may also have contributed to the iconographic confusion of seraphim and cherubim, and artists often represented the cherubim and seraphim in identical fashion, with six, many-eyed wings.⁶³

Liturgy, therefore, influenced the development of the Christian iconography of these angelic beings, and furthermore encouraged

62. Translation from F.E. Brightman, *Liturgies Eastern and Western*, Vol. 1 (Oxford, 1896), 175. And see also the *Historia ecclesiastica*, a liturgical commentary written by the Patriarch Germanus (ca. 634–ca. 733): “You who sit upon the cherubim, manifest yourself to us” (Brightman, “The *Historia Mystagogica*,” 387).

63. J. Goar, *Euchologion sive rituale graecorum* (Venice, 1730; rp. Graz, 1960) 61; Brightman, *Liturgies Eastern and Western*, 385; Wulff, *Cherubim, Throne und Seraphim*, 19ff.; RBK III:84.

For example, one must look ahead to the early tenth-century chapel (#3) at Güllü Dere, which contains a composite representation in the apse of visions of the seraphim, cherubim and tetramorphs, deriving from Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel and Revelation. The program includes two tetramorphs (ΠΟΛΥΩΜΜΑΤΟΝ [sic]), with eye-filled wings, flanking Christ who is enthroned in a mandorla held by the four beasts of Ezekiel and Revelation; two seraphim (ΕΞΑΠΤΕΡΤΤΟΝ) meanwhile give Isaiah and Ezekiel a coal and a book, respectively, to eat. Both of these seraphim have six many-eyed wings. See J. Lafontaine-Dosogne, “Théophanie-visions auxquelles participent les prophètes dans l’art byzantin après la restauration des images,” in *Synthronon. Art et archéologie de la fin de l’Antiquité et du Moyen Âge* (Paris, 1968) 138ff.; D. I. Pallas, “Eine Differenzierung unter den himmlischen Ordnungen (Ikonographische Analyse),” *BZ* 44(1971):55–60; and N. Thierry, *Haut moyen-age en Cappadoce. Les églises de la région de Çavuşin* (Paris, 1983) 126ff., and pls. 52, 53.

A six-winged tetramorph guards paradise in the ninth-century Paris Gregory; L. Brubaker, *Vision and Meaning in Ninth-Century Byzantium. Image as Exegesis in the Homilies of Gregory of Nazianzus* (Cambridge, 1999) fig. 10, and also 282–83. This iconography of a tetramorph with an extra pair of wings is not uncommon; see Wulff, *Cherubim, Throne und Seraphim*, 32ff.

the iconography's dissemination. Neither Pseudo-Dionysius's speculations on the angelic hierarchy nor the increasing interest in the cherubim found in the *contra Judaeos* literature reveal any direct influence on the iconography of these beings.⁶⁴ Extant representations of cherubim and seraphim betray direct inspiration from liturgical descriptions. Because of this influence, mixing of the iconography of cherubim and seraphim is the rule by the Middle Byzantine period, and differentiation of the angelic beings is often possible only through inscriptions.⁶⁵ The iconography was, in fact, never settled, and this ambiguity indicates that the patrons and artists did not always see the need to distinguish the beings.

In pre-Iconoclastic art, style was a notable expression of iconographic meaning.⁶⁶ The manipulation of style by Christian painters, mosaicists and sculptors has particular interest in this context as style came to be an important means to communicate the difficult nature of angels. If pagan art provided antecedents for the creation of a Christian iconography of angels, it also furnished diverse stylistic modes.⁶⁷ In particular, stylistic analyses show that in the period before Iconoclasm painters and mosaicists used a more naturalistic "classical" style to indicate the distinct qualities of angels.

An examination of the icon of the Virgin and Child flanked by Saints Theodore and George in the Monastery of St. Catherine at Sinai (sixth / seventh century) reveals stylistic distinctions in the de-

64. The influence of the theological work of Pseudo-Dionysius is clearly perceptible in texts that discuss images in the period before Iconoclasm and is equally prevalent throughout the writings of iconophiles. The cherubim, as cited in the *contra Judaeos* literature, assumed an equally important place in iconophile theory. Both of these topics are treated in chapter 3.

65. For instance, it is unclear in the fourteenth-century mosaics whether the pendentives of the central dome of Hagia Sophia in Istanbul represented seraphim or cherubim. Although these creatures had six wings, neither the number of wings nor even the presence and absence of wings can be relied upon for general identification. On these mosaics, see C. Mango, *Materials for the Study of the Mosaics of St. Sophia at Istanbul* (Washington, D.C., 1962) 83ff.; and on this issue of confusion, see Wulff, *Cherubim, Throne und Seraphim*, 26ff., and *RBK III:85*.

66. See, for instance, Weitzmann / Kessler, *The Cotton Genesis*, 32ff., and also E. Kitzinger, *Byzantine Art in the Making* (London, 1977).

67. See O.J. Brendel, *Prolegomena to the Study of Roman Art* (New Haven and London, 1979) 125ff., on the use of disparate styles within the same monument in Roman art.

piction of angels and humans that communicate the dissimilar natures of these different categories of beings (fig. II).⁶⁸ Ernst Kitzinger has considered the stylistic treatment of the angels on the icon who stand behind the Virgin's throne and look over their shoulders at the descent of the Holy Spirit. His interpretation stresses the use of "hellenistic" survivals in the handling of the angels, and the rift between angelic and human natures that this hellenistic style expresses.

At times it appears as though a bold, sketchy manner were, so to speak, in the nature of an "iconographic attribute" of angels. An obvious explanation is that it was a means of expressing the fact that they belong to a different order of beings, that they are incorporeal, ἀσώματοι. Hellenistic pictorial technique in these cases serves as a means not of actualizing physical, but of accentuating spiritual existence.⁶⁹

68. K. Weitzmann, *The Monastery of Saint Catherine at Mount Sinai. The Icons. Volume One: From the Sixth to the Tenth Century* (Princeton, 1976) 18ff., and pls. IV, V, VI, XLIII, XLIV, XLV, XLVI.

69. Kitzinger, "Byzantine Art in the Period between Justinian and Iconoclasm," in *Berichte zum XI. Internationalen Byzantinischen-Kongress, München, 1958* (Munich, 1958) 47. See also his "On Some Icons of the Seventh Century," in *Late Classical and Mediaeval Studies in Honor of Albert Mathias Friend, Jr.*, ed. K. Weitzmann et al. (Princeton, 1955) 134, on the seventh-century fragment of the head of an angel from Sta. Maria Antiqua, Rome. See also H. Maguire, *The Icons of Their Bodies. Saints and Their Images in Byzantium* (Princeton, 1996) 70–71.

Andrei Cornea offers a complementary interpretation of the meaning of style in this image. See A. Cornea, "On 'Fiction' and 'Authenticity' in Byzantine Pre-Iconoclastic Painting," *Revue roumaine d'histoire de l'art* 17(1980):6. Cornea questions the assumption that communicating a sense of life and motion is the aim of the "hellenistic pictorial technique" in the depiction of angels. Cornea proposes two different modes of depiction that he calls "a symbol-image based on fiction" and "a history-image based on truth." The Virgin and Child and the saints are depicted in a frontal, hierachic manner to indicate their essential historicity; this abstract manner is in direct opposition to the fictional, illusionistic depiction of the angels, which signifies their incomprehensibility. For Cornea, artists used this "hellenistic" manner because, "the naturalistic style could automatically awake in the spectators' minds the stereotypic link, indicating that the image was a fiction lacking a real bodily model, as the statues of gods were, according to the Christians, mere fictions having no anthropomorphic referent they could imitate" (*ibid.*, 7). In other words, the fictional quality of naturalistic depiction of the angels is not an "iconographic attribute" for Cornea, but rather a "classification-index" that warns that any relation to reality is purely coincidental. See also the remarks of Belting, *Bild und Kult*, 148ff.

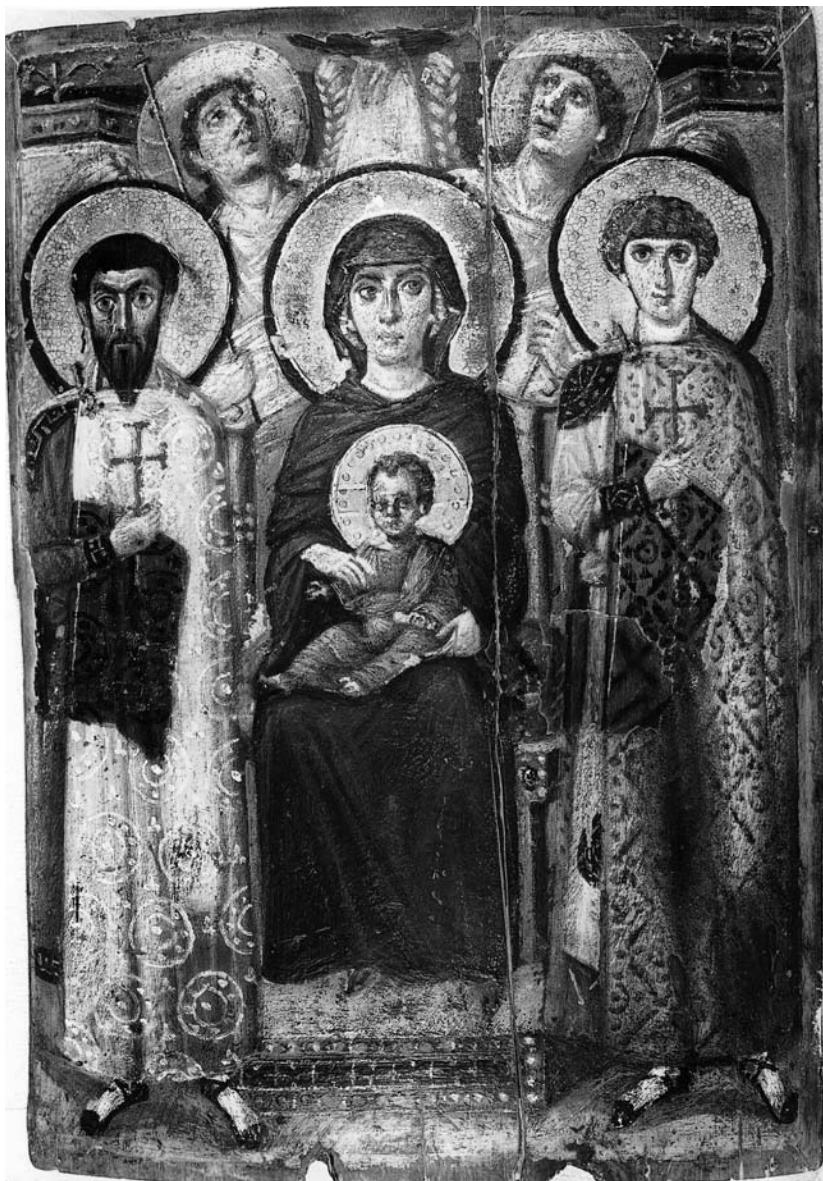


Figure 11. Icon of the Virgin and Child, flanked by Saints Theodore and George, Monastery of St. Catherine at Sinai, sixth / seventh century.
Reproduced through the courtesy of the Michigan–Princeton–Alexandria Expedition to Mount Sinai.

According to this interpretation, the viewer must make a judgment on the distinct handling of the angels compared to the other figures on this icon, and discern differences in nature from differences in style. The delicate handling of the angels' features and their believable turning, even in the small space allowed, distinguishes the angels from the hieratic figures of the saints; as opposed to these static saints, the central figures of the Virgin and Child in the foreground appear more animated, less frontal, and thus more dynamically alert than the mortal saints to the descending Holy Spirit. Ultimately, analysis reveals that, in this case, the relatively naturalistic depiction of the angels has a paradoxical ability to indicate to the viewer a nature different from that of humanity.

In the hands of painters and mosaicists, style continued throughout the Early and Middle Byzantine periods to be a means of establishing a distinction between human and angelic nature. Two examples of middle Byzantine images reveal that a different style was, in fact, used to represent angels for different ends. For instance, Henry Maguire has contrasted the ninth-century mosaic of the Archangel Gabriel, found in the bema arch of Hagia Sophia, Constantinople, with the Virgin and Child in the apse (figs. 12, 13): "the bodies of the archangels in heaven tended to be rendered as flat and without modeling, because of their lack of materiality."⁷⁰ In the mosaic, the Archangel is set within a gold field that dematerializes his form, and his robes are unmodeled sheets, unrevealing of any substantial form beneath. In contrast, the faces of the Virgin and Child in the apse are naturalistically formed, and they are fashioned three-dimensionally, settled coherently on a substantial throne.

The angels are depicted in an abstract manner to denote the im-palpable quality of the heavenly realm; conversely, a more naturalistic style in representations is the complement of angelic activity on earth. An example contemporary with the bema mosaic of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople is a depiction of the epiphany of the

70. "Style and Ideology in Byzantine Imperial Art," *Gesta* 28(1989):223. The dating of the apse mosaics at Hagia Sophia to the ninth century is not uncontested; for an alternate view, see N. Oikonomidès, "Some Remarks on the Apse Mosaics of St. Sophia," *DOP* 39(1985):111–15.

seraphim to Isaiah in the Vatican “Cosmas” (fig. 14).⁷¹ In contrast to the stationary, flat seraphim flanking Christ, the human, winged seraphim is clearly occupying a different sphere; the single seraphim strides toward Isaiah in a lively manner, and his torso bends at the waist as his outstretched hand inserts the coal into Isaiah’s mouth. The stylistic distinction between the celestial activities of the seraphim and their rare manifestations on earth is convincingly conveyed by the illusionistic handling of the appearance of the angel before Isaiah, distinct from the seraphim hieratically flanking Christ.

Painters and mosaicists continued to be able to indicate through style the qualities of angels’ nature, as well as their mode of activity. The illustration of Isaiah’s epiphany in the Vatican “Cosmas” is particularly telling because iconography and style work in unison to suggest the earthly and unearthly activities of formless beings. On earth, the seraphim can take on a guise different from their heavenly “form,” and the difference between the seraphim’s anthropomorphism and their many-winged form reveals their fluid formlessness. Iconography can, therefore, distinguish modes of activity in the same illustration, while abstract and naturalistic styles further demonstrate the angels’ different capacities, both attendance in heaven and service on earth.

A more classical modeling can be employed after the ninth century, just the same, to show the earthly movement and work of the angels. Kurt Weitzmann has described the twelfth-century icon of the miracle of the Archangel Michael at Chonae from the Monastery of St. Catherine, Mount Sinai (fig. 15), as an example of classical modeling indicating corporeality and immediacy:

[Michael is] rendered as a youth of Apollonian beauty, gracious in the movement of the body which is shown in full plasticity under a garment which, in classical fashion, clings to the body and whose folds combine a rhythmic flow with modeling power.⁷²

71. See *Topographie chrétienne*, ed. Wolska-Conus, II: 249.

72. See K. Weitzmann, “The Classical in Byzantine Art as a Mode of Individual Expression,” in *Byzantine Art. An European Art. Lectures* (Athens, 1966) 166–67 [= K. Weitzmann, *Studies in Classical and Byzantine Manuscript Illumination*, ed. H. L. Kessler (Chicago, 1971) 166–67].



Figure 12. Archangel Gabriel, Mosaic, Bema arch, Hagia Sophia, Istanbul, ninth century. Photo: Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, D.C.

In contrast, cordoned by the ropey water descending, the bantam hermit opposite Michael is insubstantial and hidden within the monastic carapace. The fuller angelic corporeality, perhaps an oxymoron, lends a sense of presence and actuality, while the self-denial practiced so arduously by the hermit effaces his physical being. The two fields denoted by the joining streams in the middle therefore



Figure 13. Virgin and Child, Apse Mosaic, Hagia Sophia, Istanbul, ninth century. Photo: Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, D.C.

create two areas of existence, the angelic one occupied by a full-bodied angel and the mortal one almost evacuated by the dematerializing body of the hermit.

This brief examination of representation of angels in the early Christian and Byzantine periods has revealed only an occasional engagement on the part of mosaicists, painters and sculptors with is-



Figure 14. Vision of Isaiah, *The Christian Topography* of “Cosmas Indicopleustes,” Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, gr. 699, fol. 72v, ninth century. Photo: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.

sues of nature and identity in art. The issues were never resolved as the subjects, that is the angels, were not open to autopsy by artists, since knowledge of angels was derived primarily through descriptions of their enigmatic epiphanies in scripture. Because of the distance of these subjects, painters, mosaicists and sculptors were forced to sidestep problems of making apprehensible something only partially seen and known in the past. Their circumvention of real description is most clearly evident in the straightforward use of an anthropomorphic form for angels. Evidently, the artist was abdicating responsibility for describing nature or identity and was placing the burden of recognizing the being depicted on the shoulders of the



Figure 15. Icon of the Miracle at Chonae, Monastery of St. Catherine at Sinai, twelfth century. Reproduced through the courtesy of the Michigan–Princeton–Alexandria Expedition to Mount Sinai.

viewer. The iconography of the angels is only, then, occasionally complex in its exegesis of spiritual nature and appearances as in the important series of scenes describing the Philoxenia. This series shows that painters and mosaicists—or programmers—recognized the enigmatic quality of the event and attempted to indicate this quality through the description of the “men” as winged or unwinged.

Wings were used throughout as the primary means to communicate the symbolic nature of the iconography of angels. Color and cloud were also used to indicate the fire and wind composition of angels that scripture prescribed but these solutions were not common.⁷³ Preeminently, the winged youth is an expansive iconography that is allusive to all angels, corresponding to the semantic range of the word “angelos” (ἄγγελος), and not descriptive in any essential way of their nature or appearance. Theological writings furthermore show that Christians generally interpreted angelic epiphany as dissimulation, unrelated to the true nature and form of angels.⁷⁴ In the

73. For instance, a sixth-century mosaic in the Church of St. Demetrios in Thessalonike shows an angel seamlessly emerging from a cloud; the mosaic does not correspond to any episode in the surviving hagiographic narratives, although it may depict the martyrdom of the saint. See R. Cormack, *Writing in Gold. Byzantine Society and Its Icons* (London, 1985) 79–80, fig. 22; Bussagli, *Storia degli angeli*, 97ff. Christian painters, mosaicists and sculptors also attempted to indicate the fiery quality of angels iconographically. For example, an early sixth-century mosaic in the church of San Apollinare Nuovo, Ravenna, represents Christ as the shepherd and judge of Matthew 25. Two standing angels flank the seated Christ, one of whom is red, denoting fire and light, while the other is cobalt blue, denoting the tenebrous nature of a fallen angel. See E. Kirschbaum, “L’angelo rosso e l’angelo turchino,” *RivAC* 17(1940):209–48, and G. Bovini, *Mosaici di S. Apollinare di Ravenna: Il ciclo cristologico* (Florence, 1958) 37ff., fig. 4, pl. X. And at Sta. Maria Maggiore, Rome, the hands, feet and faces of the angels are depicted “meravigliosamente rosso” in the fifth-century mosaics; see Kirschbaum, “L’angelo rosso e l’angelo turchino,” 215. C. Cecchelli, *I mosaici della Basilica S. Maria Maggiore* (Turin, 1956) pls. XLIX, LIII, and Grabar, *The Golden Age of Justinian*, figs. 157, 161, 162. And, more generally, see A. Petzold, “‘His Face Like Lightning’: Colour as Signifier in Representations of the Holy Women at the Tomb,” *Arte medievale* 6/2(1992): 149–55.

74. For instance, Basil of Caesarea wrote, “For just as the brand is known through the fire, the one the underlying matter, the other the fire; so with the heavenly powers, they are in essence aerial spirit, if you would, or immaterial fire according to scripture, ‘Who maketh his angels spirits; his ministers a flaming fire’ (Ps. 104:4). Wherefore they are in a place, and become visible, they appear in an image of their own bodies, in this way, to the worthy. But the source of their holiness being outside of their nature is brought to fulfillment by contact with the Spirit” (*De Spiritu Sancto*, XVI.38, in *Traité du Saint-Esprit*, SC vol. 17 bis, ed. B. Pruche [Paris, 1968] 380–82).

same way, visual representations are allusions to this angelic dissimulation, and the apparently straightforward representation of winged anthropomorphic figures paradoxically signifies the angels' multi-form constitution.

The assimilation of pagan iconography of winged personifications described in this chapter did not go unnoticed or unopposed by certain figures within the church. Theodoret of Cyrrhus noted that the use of imperial models for Christian art was in keeping with the dignity owed to God.⁷⁵ Although subsequent chapters examine this dialogue in greater depth, the assertion made by the pagan in the pagan-Christian “dialogue,” the *Apocriticus*, is also relevant here. The pagan stated that the gods and the angels were alike in everything, their proximity to God, their spirituality and service; only their names were different.⁷⁶ His opponent, Macarius Magnes, rejected any such connection between the dignity and nature of false gods and true servants; furthermore, he denied the ability of art to depict beings so pure and transcendent.⁷⁷ To Christians who held views similar to Macarius Magnes on angels and art, such connections between pagan and Christian iconography must have appeared as debasing to the spiritual beings and a dangerous invitation to pagan idolatry.

75. *Orationes de imaginibus tres*, III.80, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*. III, 176: “And just as the Romans in painting imperial images surrounded [the emperor] with spear-bearers and depicted subject peoples, so Christians depict by similar means. Since the emperor through his appearance assumes the form of God, as borne upon a throne, they reveal the images to all people on earth, and in his form they confer on him what is fitting, the ruler according to the teachings of God.” See de’ Maffei, *Icona, pittore e arte al Concilio Niceno II*, 74.

76. Blondel 200.1–12: “If therefore you say that the angels who are stationed near God are passionless and immortal and by nature incorruptible, which we ourselves call gods, on account of their nearness to God on high, what is there that should be disputed about the name or is it only a distinction brought out in the naming? For as far as the name goes the Romans call Minerva what the Greeks call Athena, and the Egyptians and the Syrians and the Thracians call her something else again. Is it not true that they conform despite the difference in names or removed from the name of the god? Some therefore call these angels, or either some call them gods, but there is not very much difference, since their divine nature is testified for, when Matthew wrote thus, ‘But Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as angels in heaven’ (22:29–30).”

77. Blondel 214–15.

The assimilation of pagan iconography into Christian art was not, therefore, universally approved, and in the first half of the sixth century Severus of Antioch delivered a sermon against the depiction of angels as “princes or kings, in a purple and royal robe, holding marks of universal power.” Despite the differences between pagan and Christian iconography, he evidently believed that the distinctions were not clear enough. Moreover, according to Severus, worshippers were led to think that these intangible servants were God’s co-rulers.⁷⁸ Depicting angels as terrestrial, temporal creatures appeared to opponents of images of angels to be a humiliation of spiritual qualities, and for some the pagan parallels for winged beings were potentially misleading.

The sixth-century epigrams, examined in chapters 2 and 3, display a degree of defensiveness that would certainly support this conclusion. The occasional attempts by mosaicists, painters and sculptors to come to terms with the nature and identity of angels were apparently not effective in the eyes of all Christians. Although these artists added wings to an anthropomorphic form in order to indicate certain symbolic alterations of form that angels accomplished, they could not describe angels in any definitive sense. Representation of angels potentially involved a number of unpalatable issues, idolatry, angelolatry and, at the very least, disrespect for profoundly spiritual beings. The anti-image accusations and iconophile answers to these accusations and the ways in which writers about angels, particularly in miracle stories, approached these issues are the subjects of the following chapters.

78. See chapter 2.

Two

ARGUMENTS AGAINST IMAGES OF ANGELS

Adherents to a literal interpretation of scripture and to intellectual worship simply could not reconcile angelic nature—which is essentially incomprehensible—with material, allusive representations in art. The best-known opponent of artistic representation in the period leading up to Iconoclasm in the eighth century was Epiphanius of Salamis (ca. 315–403). Epiphanius’s theology developed from his anti-allegorical stance; and his opposition to religious imagery later made him a natural champion for the iconoclastic party.¹

Elaborate written defenses of images of angels evidently did not arise in the period between Epiphanius and Iconoclasm. However, epigrams are extant from the sixth century that reveal a development

i. On Epiphanius and Iconoclasm, see P. Maraval, “Épiphane, ‘Docteur des Iconoclastes,’” *Nicée II, 787–1987. Douze siècles d’images religieuses. Actes du colloque international Nicée II tenu au Collège de France, Paris les 2, 3, 4 Octobre 1986*, ed. F. Boespflug and N. Lossky (Paris, 1987) 51–62; on the anti-Originist theology of Epiphanius, see E. A. Clark, *The Origenist Controversy. The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate* (Princeton, 1992) 86ff.

G. Ostrogorsky, *Studien zur Geschichte des byzantinischen Bilderstreites* (Breslau, 1929) 69ff., doubted the authenticity of some of the texts, while Holl showed that they are all Epiphanius’s own writings. This study takes the position that the texts of Epiphanius as collected by iconoclasts and refuted by iconophiles reflects a real concern on the part of the fourth-century theologian concerning material representation.

in a direction quite different from Epiphanius's interpretation of angels' images. These show affinities with a symbolic, materialist theology that finds its most detailed and articulate defense in the eighth and ninth centuries. For instance, Agathias (ca. 532–ca. 580) wrote on an image of the Archangel Michael on the island of Plate in the Sea of Marmara, south of Constantinople:

The wax, greatly daring, has represented the invisible, the incorporeal chief of the angels in the semblance of his form. Yet it was no thankless [task] since the mortal who beholds the image directs his mind to a higher contemplation. His veneration is no longer distracted: engraving within himself the [archangel's] traits, he trembles as if he were in the latter's presence. The eyes encourage deep thoughts, and art is able by means of colours to ferry over [to its object] the prayer of the mind.²

Agathias's description of an approach to images of angels is antithetical to Epiphanius's literal position and reveals an ability to interpret material images as the symbolic means to knowledge of an incomprehensible creature. In this description of the image of the archangel, the difficulty of comprehension derives from the incorporeal nature which would seem to be incompatible with material representation; but in Agathias's conception the image also provides the viewer with the means to approach knowledge of the distant and immaterial archangel by way of contemplation of the colors and outlines on the surface of the image. The material image is therefore the bridge between mundane reality and spiritual truths otherwise unattainable. No less intellectual than Epiphanius's, this approach nonetheless admits and encourages material, symbolic aids for worship and contemplation. These two opposing methods of gaining knowledge of God characterize the two sides of a long-standing debate in Byzantine society leading to the convulsive conflict of the Iconoclastic period.

2. *The Greek Anthology*, ed. W. R. Paton, 5 vols. (London, 1927) I:34; trans. C. Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire. 312–1453. Sources and Documents* (Toronto, 1986) 115.

Debate over the proper means to a comprehension of divine things, in this case angels, characterizes the period leading up to Iconoclasm in the eighth century.³ Art was part of this debate because it generated discussion over seemly worship and appropriate avenues to gaining knowledge. The angels' iconography is essentially symbolic in that it relates a human form sometimes assumed by angels but not descriptive of their real nature. The addition of wings is a significant marker in this iconography since wings signal transcendence and ethereality and inhuman speed, all characteristics of the angelic host. This symbolic iconography was evidently not suitable to all Christians, and texts from the fourth century on reveal that such images of angels had excited opposition. Moreover, the dangers of idolatry that attached to material images and to angels themselves were important considerations. This chapter seeks to isolate these strands of theological discussion concerning images of angels and, furthermore, argues that these strands influenced one aspect of iconoclastic opposition to symbolic images of angels. The extant opposition to images of angels falls into two general categories: fourth-century anti-imagist theology and the Monophysitism of fifth-/sixth-century Syria. This chapter examines the particular historical context for these sources and concludes with an examination of the common concerns that allowed their authors to be harnessed to the iconoclastic cause.

Earlier evidence for opposition to images is known mainly through the marshaling of patristic precedents to support the iconoclasts' position on images. A sifting of iconophile texts provides firm documentation of the nature of pre-Iconoclastic opposition to symbolic images, particularly those of angels. Long-standing theological divisions manifest themselves in part by the choice of patristic precedent in the arguments of the opposing sides of the controversy.⁴ Iconoclasts argued that image worship was a recent re-introduction of the idolatry that Christians had overcome but to which they had again

3. See Cameron, "The Language of Images."

4. See the recent survey by A. Giakalis, *Images of the Divine. The Theology of Icons at the Seventh Ecumenical Council* (Leiden, New York and Köln, 1994) 22ff.

succumbed. Iconophiles, on the other hand, claimed their own patristic support in favor of their position of a long-standing and proper worship of icons, initiated and sanctioned by scripture.⁵ The traditions of the Church were thus understood in completely divergent ways by each camp. Both parties, therefore, claimed a distinct line of tradition within the church, written and unwritten, and this chapter examines the development of an anti-image, intellectual theology that motivated certain iconoclastic beliefs concerning representations of angels.

Evidence for the effects of this theology on material objects is scanty; one assumes that before Iconoclasm some images may have been removed because of philosophical differences but that on the whole images were produced and opponents simply avoided such material aids. However, at the end of this chapter, mosaics of the angelic powers in the bema arch of the church of the Dormition at Nicaea (Iznik) will furnish examples of how iconoclasts viewed—and corrected—angels' images.

Both sides of the Iconoclastic controversy claimed the great father of the early Church and renowned opponent of heretics, Epiphanius of Salamis. Iconoclasts declared him a paragon because of his writings against the manufacture and worship of images.⁶ Epiphanius was a particularly difficult case for iconophiles since he was a theologian of unassailable orthodoxy, having written two influential works, the *Panarion*, a famous anti-heretical treatise, and the doctrinal study *An-*

5. A certain disregard for scruples of historical research is evident, and indeed charges of falsification of texts were traded by both sides. P.J. Alexander described the collection and confirmation of patristic sources by the iconoclast faction in the preparation for the iconoclastic Council of Hagia Sophia in 815 as more painstaking and scrupulous than the first iconoclastic Council of Hiereia, held in 754. For this reason, the patristic citations of the later council were expanded and more accurately cited than the sources adduced at Hiereia. See P.J. Alexander, "Church Councils and Patristic Authority. The Iconoclastic Council of Hiereia (754) and St. Sophia (815)," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 63(1958):493–505.

6. These survive only in the fragments found in the rebuttal of Nicephorus, in the *Adversus Epiphanidem*, part of his *Antirrhetics*, written in the period 818–20; see Pitra IV:292–380. See Maraval, "Épiphane, 'Docteur des Iconoclastes,'" 61, and H.G. Thümmel, *Die Frühgeschichte der ostkirchlichen Bilderlehre. Texte und Untersuchungen zur Zeit vor dem Bilderstreit*, TU vol. 139 (Berlin, 1992) 65ff.

coratus, the “Anchor of Faith.” Rather than making a frontal attack, iconophiles leveled the charge, often repeated in this period, of willful falsification.

Epiphanius’s position is the clearest and earliest statement of an opposition to images based on a literal reading of art and a spiritual mode of worship. His active iconoclasm with regard to Christian images is still in doubt,⁷ but his attitude to art is clear from the extant fragments. In short, Epiphanius rejected the ability of art to convey any truth about divine nature: “If someone endeavours to perceive the divine character of the holy Logos in the flesh, out of material colours.... [let him be anathema].”⁸ A corollary for Epiphanius is that angels who are spiritual, bodiless and immaterial—though not to the same extent as God—cannot be depicted materially. As he wrote, images, dead and lifeless matter, debase and diminish the angels.⁹ Epiphanius could not countenance the representation of Christ as man since this representation merely reduced Christ to one aspect of his duophysite nature; nor would he allow angels to be depicted as men with mortal traits of “bone and sinew,” because angels are essentially spiritual beings whose nature is like a “devouring fire.” Representations of angels in dead and lifeless matter degrade the prototypes and diminish their nature.

Furthermore, Epiphanius was a fervent opponent of artists’ “deceptions.” Artists’ handiwork is not purely spiritual and, therefore, misleading in his view. It follows that all worship based on material images is essentially idolatrous. According to Epiphanius, artists created empty inventions according to their own fancies, in a medium

7. The well-known incident of the destruction of a curtain covering a door in a church has been interpreted traditionally as a sign of Epiphanius’s active opposition to Christian art. See, for instance, E. Kitzinger, “The Cult of Images in the Age Before Iconoclasm,” *DOP* 8(1954):92ff. However, Sister Charles Murray, *Rebirth and Afterlife. A Study of the Transmutation of Some Pagan Imagery in Early Christian Funerary Art* (Oxford, 1981) 31ff., convincingly analyzed this passage as proof of Epiphanius’s vigorous antagonism simply towards pagan art. The curtain, in her view, depicted a pagan figure, perhaps a god, that Epiphanius felt to be inconsistent with the decoration of a place of worship. Indeed, the event is related within the context of Epiphanius’s apology for not having sent a replacement sooner.

8. Holl 363 (#34) = *Adv. Epi.*, V.14, Pitra IV:303.18–20.

9. Holl 357 (#4) = *Adv. Epi.*, VI.16, Pitra IV:306.35–307.1.

clearly inadequate to the subject. On the representations of Christ and the saints, all Epiphanius saw was irrelevant whimsy that cannot be substantiated by witness.¹⁰ Epiphanius based his position on images of the saints on a pragmatic distinction: the saints lived on earth, had mortal form and so have a single likeness; nonetheless, artists cannot and do not retrieve this likeness because they did not see the subjects with their own eyes. With regard to angels and Christ, the difficulty is of a different order since they are essentially spiritual and comprehensible only in spiritual terms.¹¹ Furthermore, the images of angels falsely attempt to communicate another level of the unknowable which is misrepresented by anthropomorphic forms on material images. Distinct even from representing Christ as man, artists who attempt to contain angelic nature in “bone and sinew” are guilty of deceit since they are not capable of knowing or seeing angels properly; likeness in any meaningful sense is simply out of reach.

Epiphanius’s position on images was based on an anti-allegorical, anti-Origenist stance that could not conceive of an image relating symbolically to its prototype.¹² For Epiphanius, the image and the

10. Holl 361 (#24) = *Adv. Epi.*, XVIII.79, Pitra IV:352.12–22: “At the same time they mislead by their strange notions, representing the appearance of the saints in this or that manner, sometimes as old men and sometimes as youths, such things as they had never seen, they make their own. For they paint the Savior with long hair by some fancy (*ύπονοοας*), on account of his being called the Nazarene, as Nazarenes have long hair. And they fail who attempt to bind these types to him. For the Savior drank wine, whereas the Nazarenes did not drink.” And Epiphanius leveled the same accusation at painters of images of the apostles: “And again believing according to their own notions what they make, they deceive. For these deceivers portray Peter the holy apostle as an old man with hair and beard cut close. And also some describe Saint Paul as balding and some bald pated and with a beard, while the other apostles as cropped” (Holl 362 [#26] = *Adv. Epi.*, XIX.86, Pitra IV:357.25–32).

11. Christ’s divine nature made likeness impossible: Epiphanius rejected the ability of art to represent “the unknowable, the inexpressible, the incomprehensible, the unspeakable, whom only Moses was able to face” (Holl 359 [#12]).

12. George Florovsky, in “Origen, Eusebius, and the Iconoclastic Controversy,” *Church History* 19(1950):77–96, and C. von Schönborn, *L’icône du Christ. Fondements théologiques élaborées entre le Ier et le IIer Concile de Nicée (325–787)* (Fribourg, 1976) 55ff., 164ff., have described the parallels between iconoclast theology and Origenism. The human nature of Christ was, in Origenist terms, overcome and superseded by the transcendental reality of Christ risen, and so his nature is beyond description in any material depiction or description. Certainly, this position has analogies with that of the iconoclasts, as well as that of

prototype were fundamentally distinct and any defense that linked the two would inevitably demean the prototype. The only real worship is founded on intellectual approaches to spiritual truths and not on material aids consisting of images. Images of angels pose particular problems of the relation between material image and immaterial prototype, and seemed to Epiphanius to be more of an obstacle than a clarification and facilitation of worship.

A text relating a dialogue between the fourth-century theologian Macarius Magnes and a pagan opponent shows similar mistrust of material representations, once again in the case of angels.¹³ The exchange over angels formed part of a work known as the *Apocriticus*, likely an invented dialogue between Macarius and a pagan. The texts of Macarius Magnes and the pagan with whom he is engaged in discussion find their earliest testimony in the work of Nicephorus (ca. 750–828), patriarch of Constantinople at the second outbreak of Iconoclasm in 815.¹⁴ Despite Macarius Magnes's allegiances to the allegorical methods of Origen (ca. 185–254) which iconoclasts es-

Epiphanius; Epiphanius's position, which the iconoclasts found so attractive, was that Christ's divinity is essentially unknowable and can only be demeaned and made separate by merely depicting the human Christ. It must also be said, however, that Epiphanius's anti-Origenism lies primarily in his opposition to Origen's heterodox views on the Trinity; more importantly for this study, Epiphanius's rejection of Origen's method of allegorical interpretation was also an important part of his dissent. On this question, see Clark, *The Origenist Controversy*, 86ff. Moreover, it is just this openness to symbolic interpretations that characterizes the iconophile approach to images, especially those of angels; see chapter 3.

13. A. Harnack, *Kritik des Neuen Testaments von einem griechischen Philosophen des 3. Jahrhunderts. Die in Apocriticus des Macarius Magnes enthaltene Streitschrift*, TU vol. 37/3 (Leipzig, 1911) and G. Bardy, in *DTC IX:1456ff.*, put Macarius Magnes in the late fourth-century. Harnack identified the opponent as the pagan neo-Platonist Porphyry (ca. 232–ca. 303), the writer of a famous anti-Christian treatise in fifteen volumes, the Κατὰ Χριστὸν Ἀποκρίσεων.

The full text is found in Blondel who reconstructed the original text from a manuscript found in Athens; we can now be certain of the author's original intent. See also L. Duchesne, *Macario Magnete et scriptis eius* (Paris, 1877) and P.J. Alexander, *The Patriarch Nicephorus of Constantinople. Ecclesiastical Policy and Image Worship in the Byzantine Empire* (Oxford, 1958) 165ff.

14. *De Magnete*, Pitra I:302–35. Nicephorus apparently knew little of the author and gleaned whatever information he had from internal evidence; he found firm evidence of Origenism in the texts, but he also charged Macarius Magnes with Nestorian and Manichaean sympathies. See T. W. Crafer, "Macarius Magnes, A Neglected Apologist," *JTS* 8(1907):402.

chewed, iconoclasts had invoked Macarius Magnes for his kindred approach to intellectual and non-material worship.

Two texts in the dialogue, one by the pagan and one by Macarius Magnes himself, have special bearing on this discussion of angels. In this portion of the dialogue, Macarius Magnes defended Christian worship from parallels with paganism that his opponent attempted to draw, particularly with regard to idols and representations of angels. The “angelic way of life,” a common epithet of the followers of the monastic vocation, was introduced by Macarius Magnes as an answer to the pagan opponent who is made to equate the angels and the gods of the Greeks.¹⁵ Macarius Magnes proceeded to counter the pagan’s arguments with a denial of any similarity between Christian angels and pagan gods. Pagan gods simply do not exist and furthermore, he stated, the idols of the pagans have no resemblance to the Christian images because God is incomprehensible, and Christians know better than to think that deity can reside in such matter. Macarius brought up images of angels as a means of providing a concrete example of the distinctions between pagan idolatry and purer Christian veneration. Macarius Magnes wrote:

So that if someone who is right thinking should hear of a spiritual existence in heaven, he rejoices in the word of immortality, [and] he himself emulates [the excellence of angels] in his deeds, and zealously affects their merit, by avoiding marriage and fleeing the symbols of corruption, and coming to the passage of death, he is lifted up in the end into the court of the blessed, that is to say, of the angels. But certainly [the good Christian] does not depict the form [of angels], as you yourself say, and [he] does not speak to the shadow or is delighted with the phantoms, conversing with soulless matter as if it had a soul, delighting in dead visions of forms, directing prayer to voiceless matter, imagining that the divine law giver inhabits stone or wood, or pretending to subjugate the insubjugable being in bronze or iron, thinking to capture the uncapturable, he unthinkingly sketches a vague image in a dead vision.¹⁶

15. Blondel 200.1–12.

16. Blondel 214.10–20.

Later, confronted with this text, clearly antagonistic to material images, Nicephorus argued that it misrepresented Macarius Magne since iconoclasts had indubitably falsified the text and had confused Macarius Magne's argument against paganism and idolatry with a denial of Christian images. However, Macarius Magne clearly stated his opinion in this dialogue that a holy person makes a true and godly image by modeling himself after paragons of holiness in the past. For Macarius, the real image is ethical and not a material representation. Furthermore, false and misleading images made after illusory visions must be shunned.

Both Macarius Magne and Epiphanius belong to a general debate that took place in the fourth century over images, intellectual and material, in worship. Moreover, both form part of an early tradition of spiritual, anti-image worship that was resurrected in the eighth and ninth centuries during renewed debates over worship. Epiphanius stated that divinity is unrepresentable, and can be worshipped only "in spirit and truth," quoting John 4:24.¹⁷ Both theologians were suspicious of the knowledge derived through sight, especially through the viewing of deceptive images.¹⁸ Epiphanius's strong iconoclastic stance, based on the incomprehensibility of God and the essential deceptiveness of images, has parallels with the anti-image theology of Evagrius Ponticus (ca. 345–399), and Macarius's advocacy of intellectual worship is akin to Evagrius's practice of "pure prayer."¹⁹ Evagrius taught that prayer must be rid of emotions and images that are derived from the sensual world; he called this process "apatheia" ($\alpha\piάθεια$), involving a resistance to mental image-making and a worship of God only "in spirit and in truth."²⁰ Evagrius advised dis-

17. See P.J. Alexander, "The Iconoclastic Council of St. Sophia (815) and Its Definition (*Horos*)," *DOP* 7 (1953): 43, on Epiphanius's "Treatise against Those who are engaged in making, after the fashion of idols, images in the likeness of Christ, the Mother of God, Martyrs, Angels and Prophets" (frag. 30b; for text, see 63–64).

18. See, for instance, Holl 363 (#33).

19. See Clark, *The Origenist Controversy*, 102ff., on Epiphanius, and Schönborn, *L'icône du Christ*, 168, on the affinities of the anti-image theology of Evagrius and iconoclasts.

20. See Clark, *The Origenist Controversy*, 60ff.; A. Guillaumont, *Les "Képhalaia Gnostica" d'Évagre le Pontique et l'histoire de l'Origénisme chez les Grecs et chez les Syriens*, Patristica Sorbonensis, vol. 5 (Paris, 1962) 37ff., 59ff.; Evagrius Ponticus, *Traité Pratique ou Le Moine*, 2 vols., SC vols. 170, 171, ed. A. Guillaumont and C. Guillaumont (Paris, 1971) I:98ff. Accord-

engagement from all distractions: “Do not represent the divine in itself when you pray and do not permit your intellect to receive the impression of any form; but go from immaterial to immaterial, and you will comprehend.”²¹ In this sense, Epiphanius, Evagrius and Macarius share comparable positions with regard to approaches to knowledge of things divine: only intellectual and non-material routes were seemly and fruitful in their view.²²

Elizabeth Clark has described the “constellation” of practice and theory in the late fourth century that connects Epiphanius’s own iconoclasm, Evagrius’s anti-imagistic theology, and the destruction of idols in Egypt led by Theophilus (d. 412), patriarch of Alexandria from 385.²³ Epiphanius’s tearing down of a curtain depicting “some form of a man” and produced perhaps by a pagan workshop, and Macarius’s opposition to parallels made between the images of Christian angels and pagan gods must be seen in this context of the general struggle against the profane art of the pagan religion, as each theologian combated the possibility of idolatry inherent in images. Epiphanius recalled precisely the idolatrous practices censured by the Council of Laodicea in his dismissal of making images; and, indeed, that the writer of the *Apocriticus* has the pagan equate pagan idols with images of angels reveals the special fear that angels aroused in some theologians. Angels were divine creatures, certainly, but they attracted worship that was too easily equated with pagan practice. In the fourth and fifth centuries, angels and their images posed clear threats to proper approach and seemly worship as the *Apocriticus*, the Council of Laodicea and Theodoret of Cyrrhus demonstrate.

ing to Evagrius, only Moses had seen God in “his proper form and without enigma” and spoke with him “mouth to mouth”; see R. Draguet, “L’Histoire Lausiaque: Une oeuvre écrite dans l’esprit d’Evagre,” *Revue d’histoire ecclésiastique* 41(1946):330ff.

21. *De oratione*, LXVI, PG 79:1181A.

22. The general affinities are noted by J. Gouillard, “Fragments inédits d’un antirrhétique de Jean le Grammaire,” *REB* 24(1966):174–75, with regard to some fragments attributed to John the Grammarian, the iconoclastic patriarch of Constantinople from 837–43.

23. *The Origenist Controversy*, 43ff.; the thesis of the interaction of theology, politics and social practice of the fourth/fifth centuries is key to her description of these texts and events.

Some scholars cite Monophysitism as an important element in iconoclastic theology, and the accusations of iconoclastic beliefs leveled against Philoxenus of Mabbug and Severus of Antioch at the Second Council of Nicaea (787) would seem to suggest at least a theological affinity between iconoclasts and these Monophysite theologians.²⁴ Like Epiphanius and Macarius Magnes, Philoxenus of Mabbug (ca. 440–523), a bishop of Hierapolis-Mabbug in Syria, strongly opposed symbolic images in Christian worship. The opposition to allusive representations was consistent with Philoxenus's theology that emphasized the absolute transcendence and incomprehensibility of Christ's divinity; iconophiles often accused iconoclasts of just such an emphasis that led them into Monophysite error.²⁵ As an extension of this belief, Philoxenus appears to have objected to anthropomorphic images of Christ and the angels, as well as to representations of the Holy Spirit as a dove.²⁶ In a passage taken from the lost *Ecclesiastical History* of Theodore Lector or Anagnostes (d. after 527), Theophanes the Confessor (ca. 760–817/8) described the malignant Monophysite roots of Philoxenus of Mabbug's position on images:

Xenias, the servant of Satan, taught that images of the Lord and of the angels should not be accepted. He was a Persian by extraction

24. See Mansi XIII:317–18. And secondary sources include Alexander, *The Patriarch Nicephorus of Constantinople*, 52, and S. Gero, *Byzantine Iconoclasm during the Reign of Leo III with Particular Attention to the Oriental Sources* (Louvain, 1973) 127. Sebastian Brock argued for a complete dissociation of Monophysitism and iconoclastic theology in “Iconoclasm and Monophysitism,” in *Iconoclasm. Papers Given at the Ninth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, University of Birmingham, March 1975*, ed. A. Bryer and J. Herrin (Birmingham, 1977) 53–57.

25. On Philoxenus of Mabbug's theology, see A. de Halleux, *Philoxène de Mabbog. Sa vie, ses écrits, sa théologie* (Louvain, 1963); C. N. Tsirpanlis, “Some Reflections on Philoxenos' Christology,” *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 25(1980):152–62; R. C. Chesnut, *Three Monophysite Christologies: Severus of Antioch, Philoxenus of Mabbug, and Jacob of Sarug* (Oxford, 1976) 57ff.; and G. Lardreau, *Discours philosophique et discours spirituel. Autour de la philosophie spirituelle de Philoxène de Mabboug* (Paris, 1985).

26. See Alexander, *The Patriarch Nicephorus of Constantinople*, 44–45, “[Philoxenus of Mabbug's] position on images then was a logical corollary to his theological views: the angels and the Holy Spirit were clearly incorporeal and in Philoxenus' monophysite theology, Jesus Christ was first and foremost God.” See also Kitzinger, “The Cult of Images in the Age Before Iconoclasm,” 131, and S. Der Nersessian, “Une apologie des images du septième siècle,” *B*17(1944/5):70.

and, by station, a slave. Having fled from his master and being unbaptised, although he called himself a cleric, he was at the time of Calandonion perverting from the [true] faith the villages around Antioch. He was expelled by Calandonion, but Peter the Fuller consecrated him bishop of Hierapolis and renamed him Philoxenus.²⁷

Despite unsympathetic descriptions, no evidence exists in the extant texts ascribed to Philoxenus of an unambiguous iconoclastic position.²⁸ However, other texts of Philoxenus can provide testimony concerning his position regarding images and worship. These at least substantiate the charge of fundamental suspicion of images and perhaps also active iconoclasm described in the text read at Nicaea.

Judging by extant texts, Philoxenus of Mabbug held strong views on the images of Christ, the angels and the Holy Spirit in particular, on account of their essential incomprehensibility. Because of the transcendence of these beings, only worship that is intellectual and

27. Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. C. de Boor, 2 vols. (Leipzig, 1883–1885) I:134; trans. Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 43. I have changed Mango’s “saints” to “angels.” This alteration is in accordance with an extract found in J.A. Cramer, *Anecdota graeca e codd. manuscriptis Bibliothecae regiae parisiensis*, 4 vols. (Oxford, 1839–1841; rp. Hildesheim, 1967) II:109.1–2, and is in agreement with de Halleux, *Philoxène de Mabbog*, 88 n86, and Alexander, *The Patriarch Nicephorus of Constantinople*, 44–45. See also the reading given by E. Miller, “Fragments inédits de Théodore Le Lecteur et de Jean d’Égée,” *Revue archéologique* 26(1873):402, “Ἐναλας ὁ Φιλόξενος οὐτε Χριστοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ οὐτε ἀγγέλου εἰκόνας ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ συνεχάρει ἀνατίθεσθαι.”

At the Second Council of Nicaea, an excerpt was read from John Diakrinomenus’s *Ecclesiastical History* of ca. 500 which more fully describes the reasoning behind Philoxenus of Mabbug’s opposition to images of incorporeal beings and the affinities he had with Epiphanius and Macarius Magnes before him: “For Philoxenus said that it is not proper to give the angels, who are bodiless, bodies and thus in human-like shapes to depict them in a type of embodiment, and not to believe that one offers honour and faith to Christ through making an inscribed image; only that which is worship in spirit and in truth is acceptable to him. And a few lines below: he says to note this too, that [Philoxenus says] it is a childish mind that fashions the holy and venerable spirit in an image, despite the fact that the Gospels in no place teach that the Holy Spirit became a dove, but that at some point it appeared in the shape of a dove. Because it is by God’s dispensation that it appeared one time in this way and not essentially, it is by no means fitting to make images of a body for the faithful. Philoxenus taught these things and followed this teaching in practice, too. In many places, he cast down the images of angels and hid the painted images of Christ in secret places.” See Mansi XIII:180E–1B.

28. On this question, see de Halleux, *Philoxène de Mabbog*, 88ff.

unhindered by material images is possible. By faith alone, Philoxenus wrote, is humanity able to accept and understand the contradictory and difficult nature of angels:

And thus also it is in respect of the spiritual natures and orders of celestial beings, and it is faith which maketh it possible to receive every word which is spoken concerning them; for otherwise there must necessarily be unbelief, since the Book calleth them “absolute spiritual beings” [in one place], and in another it speaketh of them as “compacted bodies” to which it attributeth forms which are different from each other.²⁹

Philoxenus held that angelic appearances were not “real” but of a spiritual nature. These epiphanies consist of an appearance (φαντασία) or form (σχῆμα) intellectually accessible in some incomplete way. This formulation—in fact, not so very different from iconophile description of angelic appearances—led to a complete disregard for any images of the immaterial angels. Because angels appear in spiritual alterations, images of the angels in symbolic guise can only be defamations and distortions of transcendent, spiritual beings.³⁰

29. From Philoxenus’s sermon “On Faith,” trans. E. A. W. Budge, *The Discourses of Philoxenus Bishop of Mabbōgh, A.D. 485–519. Vol. II. Introduction, Translation, etc.* (London, 1894) 29–31, which continues, “... but [the angels] possess all the service of the members, although they have no compacted members. And how the operation of the members is established without the members themselves we have no power in our own knowledge to understand; but by this [power] which is given to us by God, I mean faith, we understand these things, and although they do not at all fall under the investigation of human thoughts they are accepted by us without any doubt.”

30. With regard to the particular case of images of Christ, the basis of Philoxenus’s resistance is ethical in that a true Christian ought to make him or herself a true image rather than worship material objects. Brock, “Iconoclasm and Monophysitism,” 54, saw the causes of Philoxenus’s hostility to images rooted in his “puritan asceticism.” Concerning the last charge made by John Diakrinomenos, Philoxenus does state in a commentary on Luke that the Holy Spirit was an intellectual vision, perceived by the intelligence of John the Baptist (Luke 3:22), and was in no way to be interpreted as an essential transformation of the Spirit itself; the Holy Spirit cannot, then, be depicted after John the Baptist’s vision since the vision was spiritual and not material. Brock hypothesized that Philoxenus’s resistance to images of doves was based on an antipathy to the local worship of Atargatis whose cult image was a dove. However, the resistance is theologically consistent with Philoxenus’s position on

Philoxenus's theological positions on intellectual worship and ethical guides are fully consistent with charges of antagonism to images, thereby substantiating his opponents' assessments of his position on art. It is noteworthy that the charges center on Philoxenus's rejection of a relation between image and model, and so any honor due the image; the charges also indicate opposition to a symbolic rendering of spiritual creatures which would make this relation of image and model untenable in Philoxenus's eyes. Moreover, writings by Philoxenus on imagination reveal affinities with the anti-image theology of Epiphanius, Macarius Magnes and Evagrius. Philoxenus believed that imagination naturally forms mental images but that these images lead one away from contemplation of true things; imagination must, therefore, be resisted and, by emptying the mind of thought and images, the spiritual path to true things can be opened.³¹ These views of Philoxenus clearly presage iconoclastic tenets. By tarring iconoclasts with the same brush as the Monophysite Philoxenus, iconophiles reinforced the frequently repeated accusation that iconoclasts were new Monophysites who rejected the incarnation in favor of Christ's divinity.³²

More ambiguous is the passage from the Second Council at Nicaea which impugned the Monophysite bishop Severus of Antioch (ca. 465–538) for his disapproval of the iconography of angels. An unsympathetic portrait of Severus's purposes in his homily on the Archangels Michael and Gabriel is given in a fragment taken from a lost *Vita* of Severus, written by John, bishop of Gabala, and read at Nicaea II. Iconophiles accused Severus of inappropriate attention to the appearance of angels in art, not iconoclasm strictly speaking:

[Severus of Antioch] used to stand in the bema and deliver long addresses, and he often attempted to persuade the multitude in the very church of the most-holy Michael that white vestments, not

the incomprehensibility of wholly spiritual entities, like the Holy Spirit and Christ, and, to a lesser degree, angels.

³¹. See Lardreau, *Discours philosophique et discours spirituel*, 125ff., and R. Kearney, *The Wake of Imagination. Ideas of Creativity in Western Culture* (London, 1988) 144ff.

³². See, for example, K. Parry, *Depicting the Word. Byzantine Iconophile Thought of the Eighth and Ninth Centuries* (Leiden, 1996) 137, 144.

purple ones, were appropriate to angels. He was not ignorant of the fact that the holy [angelic] host had no concern with vestments, but tried by this device to cause division and to urge against one another people who had this or that opinion.³³

Fortunately, the homily to which John of Gabala refers is extant and the nature of Severus's antagonism can be ascertained. Rather than urging outright iconoclasm, the homily was largely concerned with the cult of angels and the unseemly excesses to which this devotion had been prone. Severus is not unusual for having this concern; as the Epistle to the Colossians (2:18), the Council of Laodicea and Theodoret of Cyrrhus bear witness, excessive worship of the angels had created anxiety within the Church since the first centuries of the Christian era. Severus began his sermon by recalling the pagan errors of angelolatry that had been forbidden under both the Old and the New Covenants.

But, forgetting their condition as soldiers and servants, let us not dishonour them for that reason, through a pagan error, by honours which are beyond their due. For all that which is taken from that glory, which alone is God's, is a dishonour to them. That is why the angel who spoke to Manoah said, "... if thou wilt offer a burnt offering, thou must offer it unto the Lord" (Judges 13:16). And this is why also Barnabas and Paul, those servants as faithful as the angels, prevented the Lycaonian worshippers of demons from offering them a sacrifice as to gods (Acts 14).³⁴

33. Mansi XIII:184C; trans. Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 44. The response to the reading by the patriarch Tarasius (ca. 730?–806) at Nicaea is interesting because it ends in agreement with the heretic Severus of Antioch; Tarasius states that white vestments must be advocated, despite John of Gabala's assertion that iconographic detail is not a concern of the angels: "Tarasius, the holy patriarch, said, We shall consider, because he has been brought to this very thing by [the question of] relics, as he has said, that it is not befitting for angels to wear purple vestments, but they ought to wear white vestments instead" (Mansi XIII:184C). The iconographic particulars are, nonetheless, irrelevant to Tarasius's intention since in his statement he made it clear that the church takes an interest in artistic practice, to the point of managing and determining it. On this issue of ecclesiastical control of artistic production after Iconoclasm, see H. Maguire, "Magic and the Christian Image," in *Byzantine Magic*, ed. H. Maguire (Washington, D.C., 1995) 51–71.

34. Severus of Antioch, *Les homiliae cathedrales*, PO vol. 8/2, ed. M. Brière (Paris, 1919; rp. Turnhout, 1971) 82. Severus's work survives only in a Syriac translation by James of

Severus of Antioch then lashed out at the effrontery of the painters who lead Christian worshippers to pagan idolatry by their unsuitable depictions of the angels. It is worth noting that the improper worship is the really contentious issue for Severus of Antioch.

But the hand of the painters, which is insolent and which is a law unto itself, favouring the pagan inventions or the imagination and things connected to idolatry and arranging everything to that end, clothe Michael and Gabriel, as princes or kings, with a purple and royal robe, adorning them with a crown and placing in their right hand the mark of authority and universal power. It is for these reasons and others like them that those who honour the angels in such excesses abandon the Church and transgress its laws and are anathematised by those who are ordained and establish the holy canons.³⁵

Although the passage from John of Gabala says that Severus defended white robes over purple for angels, the sermon clearly does not offer an alternative iconography; Severus denigrated the current iconography of purple-clad angels as strictly untoward and overweening for servants. Justinian's garb in the mosaic at San Vitale (consecrated 548), for example, is the same as that worn by the Archangels Michael and Gabriel in mosaics of the bema arch in the contemporary church of Sant' Apollinare in Classe.³⁶ The late fifth-century Cotton Genesis, moreover, shows the angels before Lot dressed in rich vermillion, one with gold highlights.³⁷ The program for which Severus provided his ekphrasis is, of course, lost, but unquestionably Severus was opposing just this kind of incorporation

Edessa. On this sermon, see the remarks of C. Mango, "St. Michael and Attis," *DChAE* 12(1984):39ff.

35. *Les homiliae cathedrales*, 83–84.

36. See A. Grabar, *The Golden Age of Justinian. From the Death of Theodosius to the Rise of Islam*, trans. S. Gilbert and J. Emmons (New York, 1967) figs. 171 and 11, respectively, and O. von Simson, *Sacred Fortress. Byzantine Art and Statecraft in Ravenna*, 2d ed. (Chicago, 1976) 60ff.

37. K. Weitzmann and H.L. Kessler, *The Cotton Genesis. British Museum Codex Cotton Otho B. VI* (Princeton, 1986) 81–82. For other examples, see *RBK III*:29–32.

of purple-clad, worldly rulers into the iconography of angels.³⁸ Severus then raised another issue surrounding the dangerous worship of angels, as an inoculation of the cult was also being carried out. The reason for their gathering, Severus went on to state, was the decorous consecration of the new church of the Archangel Michael by means of the introduction of the relics of human saints into the church.³⁹

Severus of Antioch proceeded to the charges of insolence he made against painters of angels. He made it clear that he was only speaking figuratively since the images of the angels are not in any sense representative of the real angelic nature, but only symbols.

No one, in effect, can judge that which has rapport [with the angels] by the aspects under which they appear sometimes to saintly men; for these [aspects] are various and they are known differently according to the time, according to the appropriateness of the circumstance and in some appearances such as the eyes of sensible beings are able to perceive.⁴⁰

As the nature of the angels is so difficult to perceive, their images are in a fundamental sense misleading as well as debasing. Artistic independence, and the presumptions this leads to, is also an important theme of the homily. Severus railed against “the hand of the painters who are insolent and are a law unto themselves,” and the affinities to paganism that this kind of practice encouraged in artists.

38. On the imperial garments worn by archangels, see G. Peers, “Patriarchal Politics in the Paris Gregory (B.N. gr. 510),” *JöB* 47(1997):53–57, and, covering some similar ground, C. Jolivet-Lévy, “Note sur la représentation des archanges en costume impérial dans l’iconographie byzantine,” *CA* 46(1998):121–28.

39. Relics of saints were apparently introduced into shrines in order to make more palatable this angelic cult with a dubious history. See P. Maraval, *Lieux saints et pèlerinages d’Orient. Histoire et géographie des origines à la conquête arabe* (Paris, 1985) 56. And P. Canivet has proposed that a crypt at the fifth-century church of the Archangel Michael at Huarte in Syria had been added to provide relics and stability to a potentially excessive cult. The connection proposed by Canivet, in “Le *Michaelion* de Huarte (Ve s.) et le culte syrien des anges,” *B* 50(1980):110ff., must remain tentative.

40. *Les homiliae cathedrales*, 76–78.

In summation, Severus of Antioch was attacking the worldliness of the angels' iconography, and he concluded that this iconography led worshippers to overlook the angels' bodiless and spiritual qualities. According to Severus, angels alter their forms according to the demands of the occasion in their appearances to just men. They are never seen according to their real nature, in fact, which has nothing of the coarseness of our bodies, but in an alteration of their real form. This alteration is necessary because of the unviewability of the angelic beings. Therefore, Severus is essentially unsympathetic to material images rendered by the artistic means derived from the deceitful pagans.

Severus was not an active iconoclast but, like Philoxenus of Mabbug, interpreted angelic appearances as symbolic transformations; and the natural conclusion holds for Severus, as for Philoxenus, that images cannot express the difficulties of comprehension and nature of angels.⁴¹ Sebastian Brock is right to point out that Severus was not aggressively iconoclastic and that, in fact, his conversion may have been influenced by a fresco of Paradise. However, the principal point of the sermon is not, as Brock maintains, the depiction of angels in purple. Severus had larger issues in mind in this homily, namely the inability of art to represent angels in any essential or descriptive way and art's misleading qualities, therefore, in the context of worship.

The theological perspective represented by these four theologians, Epiphanius, Macarius, Philoxenus and Severus, is based on an ultimate spirituality of angels that cannot be communicated by any material image. Painters cannot provide appropriate means for contemplating divine things since they are misled by pagan practice into producing figured matter wholly inadequate to describe transcendent beings. In this anti-imagistic theology, an emphasis on the ethical mode of worship is characteristic; John's dictum on worship "in spirit and in truth" (4:24) is a *leitmotiv* in the works of these theologians, as it was for iconoclasts themselves who gathered the writings of these earlier theologians for their own purposes. These theologians, there-

41. Brock, "Monophysitism and Iconoclasm," 53–54.

fore, represent a distinct position with regard to approaches to knowledge of God's bodiless creations; their common approach eschewed tangible, manufactured aids in favor of more intellectual methods that avoided the production of mental or material images.

In the fragmentary texts of Epiphanius and Philoxenus, angels appear to have been adduced as corollaries to the undepictability of Christ. For Epiphanius, just the same, the angels are differentiated from Christ by their special nature, "a devouring fire," at once less exalted than the divine nature of Christ and less tangible than the human saints. Epiphanius also stated the difficulties of rendering the humanity of Christ since artists describe Christ as man out of caprice rather than out of any attempt at true likeness. The fact that Epiphanius is able to make a double calumny against Christ's images, which are equally unable to manifest any truth about either of Christ's natures, indicates the essential distinction between Christ's and angels' images: to "bone and sinew" they cannot claim any likeness at all, as Christ as human could conceivably, since angels' assumptions of human form have only been momentary and illusory.

In the fuller texts of Macarius and Severus, the special distinctions of angels' images are clearer. These theologians saw angels as unique problems since they were concerned exclusively with the issue of angelic appearances and the manufacture of images deriving from these occasions. Both of these theologians viewed material commemorations of angelic epiphany as diminishing such difficult intellectual experiences to base, misleading caricature. The angels—unlike Christ, it ought to be stressed once again—appear in a semblance of their ethereal nature, and depicting the angels in human form, only one of many forms they have assumed, can in no way communicate their immaterial nature and activity.

The danger of idolatry represented by angels' images is also a common feature of these theologians' concerns. The nature and activities of angels allowed parallels to be drawn by pagans to their own deities. Moreover, Christians themselves were evidently not immune to the attraction that angels held for their direct worship separate from God. Severus certainly feared just this possibility and the deceitful allure that angels depicted as princes possessed.

The approach represented by these four theologians influenced the position taken by iconoclasts in the eighth and ninth centuries and reveals a continuity in this anti-imagistic, intellectual theology from the fourth century on. Therefore, an understanding of the iconoclastic position with respect to angels is properly derived from these theologians; it must, in fact, depend upon their limited testimony, since a particular iconoclastic theology of angels from the eighth and ninth centuries is not extant. As only iconophile rebuttals of certain texts survive, one must assume that iconophile dialogues, for instance Nicephorus against Epiphanius and Macarius Magnes, attack positions taken by iconoclasts, who collected and defended this patristic documentation in the first place.

The theological position that expressed considerable anxiety over both idolatry and angelolatry was the formative background for the eighth-/ ninth-century iconoclastic opposition to depicting angels. It explains the concern the later anti-image theologians had for the inherent difficulties in representing angels, of course, but also for the dangers of worship of created things in general and angels in particular. As created beings, angels were not worthy of worship in and of themselves, but representing angels, as Severus pointed out, increased the likelihood of Christians mistakenly directing veneration at angels. Images in that view were the necessary nexus of idolatry and angelolatry. This association of idolatry with angelolatry reveals the primitive origins of iconoclasm, since an iconoclastic position on angels appears to be firmly rooted not only in an intellectual approach to worship but also in pastoral care for Christians who were easily led to immoderate worship of God's creature servants.⁴²

After 752, Constantine V (r. 740–775) seems to have begun a concerted assault against the iconophile position on both theological and political fronts. The strength of this attack, some twenty years after his father had initiated iconoclasm as government policy, indicates a delay in formulation of any truly radical reform. Constantine V, however, produced in the 750s an articulate expression of icono-

⁴². That the problem of dangerous devotion to angels still existed during Iconoclasm is likely revealed by the reworking of the Chonae miracle story in this period; see chapter 4.

clastic theology much beyond the apparent literalism and bluster of his father's theological convictions. Nicephorus discussed selections from the iconoclastic Πεύσεις, or "Inquiries," and specifically attributed them to Constantine's pen, and in this way he was able to impute personal initiative to the emperor in formulating an iconoclastic theology.⁴³

The iconoclastic theology revealed through the "Inquiries" and "Definition" of the council convened by iconoclasts in 754 is the culmination of one particular strand of theological interpretation of proper Christian worship and comprehension. Clearly, the common ground of these iconoclastic texts and of the patristic sources iconoclasts adduced is an agreement that the images of angels—like those of Christ—are impossible because of the subjects' immaterial, divine nature. Like Christ's image, an image of the angels' earthly appearance would merely separate one manifestation of their nature from their real formless nature.⁴⁴ Epiphanius made an important distinction since the angels—unlike Christ—cannot be depicted simply as "bones and sinew"; the angels have never taken human form, only assumed it symbolically. Therefore, the image of an angel cannot even have a stable visual relation to its prototype, let alone an essential relation. It is strictly a misleading invention by deceitful artists. Iconoclasts, augured by theologians like Epiphanius and Severus, possessed a fundamental distrust of artistic practice; since the angels are so distant from our comprehension, and indeed so rarely seen at all, artists cannot be expected to represent these spiritual beings in an accurate or meaningful way.⁴⁵

Here the shape of the theological debate may unlock the history of an important set of images, representations of angels significantly

43. *Contra Eusebium*, III, Pitra I:375–77. On the *Peuseis*, see S. Gero, *Byzantine Iconoclasm During the Reign of Constantine V with Particular Attention to the Oriental Sources* (Louvain, 1977) 37ff.

44. See Gero, *Byzantine Iconoclasm During the Reign of Constantine V* 39ff., on iconoclastic Christology.

45. See Mansi XIII:336E; Gero, *Byzantine Iconoclasm During the Reign of Constantine V*, 89, and, also, 91 (#16); M. V. Anastos, "The Argument for Iconoclasm as Presented by the Iconoclastic Council of 754," in *Late Classical and Mediaeval Studies in Honor of Albert Mathias Friend, Jr.*, ed. K. Weitzmann et al. (Princeton, 1955) 185.

altered during Iconoclasm. Admittedly, the evidence for the Church of the Dormition at Nicaea, now Iznik, is not secure: first, destroyed in 1922, the church is lost and so unexaminable, and second, the sequence of creation of mosaics in the seventh century, emendation in the eighth / ninth century and finally restoration in the ninth depends on scholarly argument founded on probabilities. Nonetheless, the position assumed here conforms to general scholarly opinion that the Church of the Dormition reflected the changes in attitudes to images from the seventh to the ninth century. Located on the arch that separates the sanctuary or bema from the nave, these mosaics of angels in the Church of the Dormition have been variously dated in their initial phase to the sixth or seventh century.⁴⁶ Although the inscriptions stated that the figures represented different orders of the angelic hierarchy, the Principalities, Virtues, Dominations and Powers, mentioned together at Colossians 1:16, the angelic beings were depicted as identical winged youths wearing the *loros* and carrying orbs and standards (figs. 9, 10). A pair occupied both the north and south portion of the arch. The subject of the pre-Iconoclastic mosaic in the apse is still an open question, and an enthroned Christ, an *orans* Virgin and a seated Virgin and Child have been suggested (fig. 16).⁴⁷

46. Fernanda de' Maffei conjectured that the mosaics had been covered during Iconoclasm, not erased as is generally thought, and the repair evident is not connected to the restoration of images in 843. See F. de' Maffei, "L'Unigenito consostanziale al Padre nel programma trinitario dei perduti mosaici del bema della Dormizione di Nicea e il Cristo trasfigurato del Sinai I," *Storia dell'arte* 45(1982):91ff., and also her *Icona, pittore e arte al Concilio Niceno II* (Rome, 1974) 99ff. However, the restorations apparent in the areas around the angels and the replacing of the cross in the apse likely belong to the same phase, probably post-843, paid for by the otherwise unknown Naucratios, as stated in an inscription between the two angels on the south bema arch. For discussion and bibliography, see Peers, "Patriarchal Politics in the Paris Gregory," 54–56, and chapter 1.

47. de' Maffei hypothesized an enthroned Christ in the apse of the church at Iznik flanked by angelic powers. See "L'Unigenito consostanziale," 91ff. By tracing the exegetical history of the psalms (110:3, 93:5, 97:7) and Col. 1:16, de' Maffei attempted to reconstruct a christological program in the apse, which centered on an enthroned Christ. While ultimately untenable, her argument is compelling, especially as it is the only one, to my knowledge, to take into consideration the angelic powers and their relation to Christ, but she finds difficulty in overcoming the art-historical evidence. The only parallel she is able to cite is in the ninth-century Chludov Psalter in which the enthroned Christ is approached by



Figure 16. Virgin and Child, Apse Mosaic (destroyed), Church of the Dormition, Iznik (formerly Nicaea), ninth century.
Photo: Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, D.C.

David (Moscow, Historical Museum, cod. 129, fol. 114v, ps. 110). See K. A. Corrigan, *Visual Polemics in the Ninth-Century Byzantine Psalters* (Cambridge, 1992) 44–45, fig. 54.

The illustration in the Chludov Psalter asserts the divinity of Christ, as the inscription accompanying the marginal illustration reads, “David prophesies concerning the son of God.” The assertion of Christ’s divine nature in this typological context derives from *contra Judaeos* literature of the sixth and seventh centuries, for example the *Trophies of Damascus*,

Such figured representations as found in the bema arch at Nicaea did not conform to the iconoclastic notion of the proper image of angels, and the figured portions of the bema arch were eliminated during Iconoclasm. Iconoclasts, of course, found representations of angels distasteful, as they found all figural religious imagery to be contrary to their beliefs concerning appropriate worship.⁴⁸ The distinguishing features of the iconoclastic alterations made on the bema arch at Nicaea were that the inscriptions and standards were left untouched. Evidently, iconoclasts did not object to every aspect of the program and felt that with editing the mosaics at Nicaea could provide proper “images” of angels that were non-figurative and relied on inscribed words.

That conversion provides vital information on attitudes toward, and meanings of, material representations of angels from the iconoclastic point of view. The sutures around the restored angelic powers reveal that the figures were erased and the mosaic field was left blank

in which the same psalm (110) is adduced to defend the divine nature of Christ. See *Les Trophées de Damas*, PO vol. 15/2, ed. G. Bardy (Paris, 1920; rp. Turnhout, 1973) 32.12–33.6. Bardy points out that this psalm is a *topos* of Jewish-Christian debates from an early date. The currency that this psalm had for the defense of Christ’s divine nature in the period before Iconoclasm, both in exegesis and apologetic literature, lends support to de’ Maffei’s reconstruction of the apse program of Christ as Lord surrounded by his heavenly servants.

The general assumption, however—which moreover has the greater attraction of plausibility—is that the Virgin and child placed in the apse after the end of Iconoclasm was a replacement for a pre-Iconoclastic composition with the same subject. This premise informs C. Barber’s analysis, for example, in “The Koimesis Church, Nicaea: The Limits of Representation on the Eve of Iconoclasm,” *JöB* 41(1991):43–60.

48. In a review of T. Schmit’s *Die Koimesis-Kirche von Nikaia, das Bauwerk und die Mosaiken* (Berlin and Leipzig, 1927), E. Wiegand claimed that making symbolic images of angels did not warrant opprobrium from the iconoclastic point of view and the bema mosaics could have been produced during Iconoclasm; see *Deutsche Literaturzeitung* 53(1927):2607. E. Kitzinger, “Byzantine Art in the Period between Justinian and Iconoclasm,” in *Berichte zum XI. Internationalen Byzantinischen-Kongress, München, 1958* (Munich, 1958) 13, dismissed Wiegand’s hypothesis and suggested himself that the angelic powers belonged originally to a pre-iconoclastic phase. P.A. Underwood, “The Evidence of Restorations in the Sanctuary Mosaics of the Church of the Dormition at Nicaea,” *DOP* 13(1959):235ff., followed up this suggestion and demonstrated conclusively—to my mind—that the church underwent three phases of mosaic decoration: pre-iconoclastic (before the 720s), iconoclastic (that is, without figured images of angels but with inscriptions and standards left intact, likely effected between the 720s and 787 but possibly also between 815 and 843), and post-iconoclastic, that is to say after the “Triumph of Orthodoxy” in 843.

during Iconoclasm. However, the inscriptions designating each of the powers, the standards that bore the inscribed Trisagion and the passage taken from Psalm 97:7 (“To him all the angels of God offer worship”) were apparently left intact and on view during this entire period.⁴⁹ Furthermore, a mosaic cross replaced either the figure of Christ or of the Virgin and Child in the apse.

This iconoclastic program demonstrates the practical limits of the depiction of angels during Iconoclasm and provides concrete form to the iconoclastic theology of angels. Given the preceding discussion of the views of iconoclasts and their predecessors, the elimination of the figural depictions of the angelic powers must be viewed as a natural extension of anti-image theory. The void outlined by the sutures, that is the absence of images, demonstrates iconoclastic belief in the inability of figural description to render angels. The preservation of the inscriptions of the angelic powers, then, marks the limit of representation according to this theory. The presence of the inscriptions, of course, was a happy coincidence for the iconoclasts since it served their purposes so well. The inscription shows that the route to contemplation of these beings must be attempted through meditation on the scriptural designations for angelic powers (Col. 1:16), the nominating inscriptions that signify the beings directly and without figural confusion.

Iconoclasts and their forbears believed that verbal worship was most appropriate.⁵⁰ Words signify purely, with none of the dissimulation or distraction of material images. Iconoclasts held that words were proper signifiers since they were capable of describing intellectually without the contamination and distraction of matter. At the iconoclastic council of 754, iconoclasts stated that “Christ” is a name that refers simultaneously to God and man; therefore, the name “Christ” is an “image” that contains reference to Christ as God and man with none of the futility and deception of the painters’ craft.⁵¹

49. See Underwood, “The Evidence for Restorations,” 240.

50. On this issue, see J.-M. Sansterre, “La parole, le texte et l’image selon les auteurs byzantins des époques iconoclastes et posticonoclastes,” in *Testo e immagine nell’alto medioevo*, Settimane vol. 41, 2 vols. (Spoleto, 1994) I:197–243.

51. Mansi XIII:252A. See de’ Maffei, *Icona, pittore e arte*, 26ff.

The names of angels are also images in this view in that they refer as pure signifiers to transcendence and incomprehensibility.

The angels' standards with the Trisagion illustrate—paradoxically—other important tenets of iconoclastic theology. The Trisagion is derived from the seraphim of Isaiah (6:3) and Revelation (4:8), and very early entered Christian piety and liturgy. In the context of Nicaea, it denotes the iconoclastic definition of the seemly verbal and ethical character of worship that iconoclasts held to be the essential elements in devotion.⁵² Iconoclasts had stated that meditation on scripture and divine words contained therein, at Nicaea Psalm 97:7, was the most appropriate and purest approach to knowledge of divine things. The priests were the fitting custodians of such truths, and iconoclasts cited approvingly Malachi 2:7: "For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts."⁵³ The pastoral care of priests is emphasized here at Nicaea precisely in the public setting once decorated with figural images so denigrated by Severus. The communal aspect ought to be stressed here: the iconoclastic revisionists reveal themselves to be guardians of the "truth," that is, in this church they demonstrate their guidance, not just an intellectual ministering but an active, collective attendance. The danger of idolatry diminished considerably, and, their care therefore demonstrated, the iconoclastic clergy—presumably—at Nicaea also indicated the locus of their power and the source of their authority, the words of the gospels left untouched in the mosaic surface.

Finally, the program centered on a cross placed over earlier figural depiction. The cross has been interpreted as the iconoclastic sign *par excellence*, although it was not exclusive to the iconoclastic cause.⁵⁴

52. See M. V. Anastos, "The Ethical Theory of Images Formulated by the Iconoclasts in 754 and 815," *DOP* 8(1954):151–60.

53. See Mansi XIII:229E. On the issue of role of the ecclesiastical hierarchy in disseminating knowledge, see Sansterre, "La parole, le texte et l'image."

54. Bibliography and discussion found in L. Brubaker, "To Legitimize an Emperor: Constantine and Visual Authority in the Eighth and Ninth Centuries," in *New Constantines. The Rhythm of Imperial Renewal in Byzantium, 4th–13th Centuries, Papers from the Twenty-sixth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, St. Andrews, March 1992*, ed. P. Magdalino (Aldershot, 1994) 139–58.

The cross was a venerable sign of victory established by the unassailable precedent of Constantine the Great.⁵⁵ An epigram later quoted by the iconophile leader Theodore of Stoudios (759–826)⁵⁶ demonstrates both the political and devotional meanings of the cross for iconoclasts.⁵⁷ The epigram stated that the image (*εἰδος*) of Christ, voiceless, breathless and material has been taken down and replaced with the sign (*τύπον*) of the cross, thrice-blessed and glory of the faithful.

In this discussion of Nicaea, the opposition of image and sign on the bema arch and in the apse is of particular relevance. The illusionistic image of Christ, in an iconoclast's view, deceives through its attempts at describing a living, breathing being out of matter, and misleads the worshipper into adoring the image itself. The cross is an abstract sign, a true image, with no danger of devotional attachment that would lead to iconophile idolatry. The program in the church of the Dormition was altered in this way so that no risk existed of attachment to figured symbols—a paradoxical affinity that iconoclasts appear to have with the seminal theology of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite (fl. ca. 500?). And, since no such abstract sign exists for angels, the inscriptions referring to angelic beings provided intellectual modes of comprehension and worship of bodiless beings.

At Nicaea, it is possible to see practice paralleling theory; the illusions of artists abhorred by iconoclasts were displaced in favor of purer signs, inscribed words. According to the iconoclastic definition of the real image, the image must be consubstantial with its prototype and this is clearly not possible for images of angels, given interpretations of their nature; only the eucharist can be a real image in

55. See A. Grabar, *L'iconoclasme byzantin. Dossier archéologique* (Paris, 1957) 134ff. and J. Moorhead, "Iconoclasm, the Cross, and the Imperial Image," *B* 55(1985):65–79.

56. *Refutatio et subversio impiorum poematum*, PG 99:437C.

57. See Grabar, *L'iconoclasme byzantin*, 130, and Gero, *Byzantine Iconoclasm during the Reign of Leo III*, 113ff.: "The ruler does not tolerate that Christ be depicted [as] a voiceless shape and bereft of breath, with earthly matter, [which is] condemned by the Scriptures; Leo, with his son Constantine, marks the thrice-blessed image of the cross, the glory of the believers, upon the gates of the royal palaces" (trans. ibid., 114–15). The first portion of the epigram is examined briefly in G. Peers, "Breathless, Speechless Images: On the Chalke Gate Epigram," in *Hommages Margaret Head Thomson*, Cahiers des études anciennes, vol. 32, ed. L. Finnemore and A. P. Booth (Trois Rivières, Québec, 1998) 109–12.

this view.⁵⁸ Approach and worship must be intellectual, spiritual and verbal. Symbolic interpretation of images of formless beings has no place in this theology, only direct contemplation and ethical worth. A coherent theology of angels' representations can, therefore, be derived from the fragments of iconoclasts and their forerunners, and the traces of iconoclastic "images" of angelic beings at Nicaea. This theology is literal in its attitude to symbolic manifestation: as Macarius Magnes described it, angelic epiphanies are intellectual and dissembling, and it behooves the good Christian to behave as Abraham and worship these revelations through scripture, inwardly in the soul, and not bow down before any image or creature.

58. Gero, *Byzantine Iconoclasm During the Reign of Constantine V*, 45ff.

Three

REPRESENTING ANGELS

Images and Theory

The practice of image worship excited opposition in certain quarters, and the theologians examined in the previous chapter were reacting to existing images that they could not reconcile with their beliefs about worship and contemplation. The preceding chapter described a process of gaining knowledge of God and things divine that had great importance for the formation of the intellectual and theological climate in the period leading up to and including Iconoclasm. This process, recounted here in terms of its relation to one kind of image, namely of angels, depended primarily on intellectual, non-material avenues to spiritual truths; it is essentially non-figural.¹ The influential theologian Evagrius Ponticus (ca. 345–399) was convinced that the mind's impulse to representation was a hindrance to proper devotion. In the opinion of Evagrius—and iconoclasts who belonged to the same theological tradition—material images were insurmountable hurdles to contemplation of divinity.²

1. Contrary to Cameron's contention in "The Language of Images," 28, not all Christian discourse was figural. The preceding chapter sought to demonstrate the slippery character of angels' appearances and nature, and the resistance this excited among certain theologians with regard to figuring angels intellectually and materially.

2. See E.A. Clark, *The Origenist Controversy. The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate* (Princeton, 1992) 8off.

Yet many Christians clearly accepted figured, material signs for contemplation and worship. This acceptance represents a mode of approach completely separate from the literalist, intellectual conception described in chapter 2. Moreover, it finds no defender of the magnitude of Epiphanius and, indeed, texts defending images of angels date only to the sixth century, after the death of Severus of Antioch. The development of attitudes to images of angels, then, would appear to conform to a pattern of practice first, followed by opposition and defense.³ However, Methodius of Olympus (d. ca. 311) described images of angels as positive testimony of honor and faith in God.⁴ The pattern of practice, opposition and defense is perhaps too generalized, then, to be allowed to characterize the period of the rise of icons. Nonetheless, this chapter seeks to outline the defense in examining texts concerning images of angels, beginning in the sixth century and concluding with a longer examination of the articulate and extensive justification of images of eighth- and ninth-century iconophiles.

APPROACHES TO SYMBOLIC IMAGES

The most influential theologian for the defense of symbolic images is Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite (fl. ca. 500?). Despite the fact that these writings deal with verbal images and the comprehension of divine things through these images, all subsequent discussion of symbolic images, both verbal and visual, relied on his seminal theology.⁵ Pseudo-Dionysius explored the diverse scriptural passages that mentioned angelic epiphanies for pattern, unity and meaning, and, in his *Celestial Hierarchy*, he offered a comprehensive examination of God's spiritual creations within a highly structured and essentially allegorical framework. His work helped articulate approaches to material

3. The classic formulation of this point of view is E. Kitzinger, "The Cult of Images in the Age Before Iconoclasm," *DOP* 8(1954):83–150.

4. See chapter 1.

5. See the Introduction, and Cameron, "The Language of Images," 24ff., and also her, "Byzantium and the Past in the Seventh Century: The Search for Redefinition," in *The Seventh Century. Change and Continuity. Proceedings of a joint French and British Colloquium held at the Warburg Institute 8–9 July 1988*, ed. J. Fontaine and J. N. Hillgarth (London, 1992) 268.

images found in the epigrams examined in this chapter, and it provided a framework within which iconophile theologians could rationalize non-representational, symbolic images of angels.

Pseudo-Dionysius stated that the angels are represented in scripture as a “concession to the nature of our own mind.”⁶ He was not speaking of images, but supporters of images understood a clear link between verbal and visual symbolism.⁷ Discussion of both verbal and visual symbolism concerns the negotiation of the means by which a Christian can come to a comprehension of God. Pseudo-Dionysius discussed one such means at great length, that is the symbolic significance of the angels and their appearances. In describing the meaning of Ezekiel’s angel which appeared in the form of four animals, for instance, Pseudo-Dionysius wrote an excursus on the meaning of their appearances as these varied beasts.⁸ The celestial intelligences took these forms, he says, because they intended to communicate obliquely some knowledge of their nature and duty. The angel took the form of a lion, for instance, to express domination, strength and unconquerability; the angel is represented as an ox because it had the “ability to plough deeply the furrows of knowledge”; the form of an eagle was assumed because of the angel’s “contemplation which is freely, directly, and unswervingly turned” to the divine light; and the form of the horse was taken on because of its “obedience and docility” which corresponds to the character of the angels.⁹ By this means, the angels imitate, as much as they are able, the secret of the ineffable divinity, and envelop themselves mysteriously so as to yield divine illumination.

6. *De coelesti hierarchia*, II.1, *La Hiérarchie Céleste*, SC vol. 58, ed. G. Heil and M. de Gandillac (Paris, 1958) 74; Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, *The Complete Works*, trans. C. Luibheid and P. Rorem (New York, 1987) 148. This contemplation of condescending symbols is also discussed in a question and answer guide from the second half of the sixth century; see J.-C. Guy, “Un Entretien monastique sur la contemplation,” *Recherches des sciences religieuses* 50(1962):234–35, 238–39.

7. See, for example, Kitzinger, “The Cult of Images in the Age Before Iconoclasm,” 137ff., and U. Jeck, “Ps. Dionysios Areopagites und der Bilderstreit in Byzanz: Überlegungen zur Dionysiosrezeption des Johannes von Damaskos,” *Hermeneia. Zeitschrift für ostkirchliche Kunst* 8/2(1992):71–80.

8. *De coel. hier.*, XV.8, *La Hiérarchie Céleste*, 184–88.

9. *De coel. hier.*, XV.8, *La Hiérarchie Céleste*, 185–87.

According to Pseudo-Dionysius, symbols offer the primary access to God, as they are condescensions that render God accessible to incarnate intelligences. The angels then take on forms, figures and schemata that can fall to our senses and be more readily grasped and interpreted.¹⁰

That one has reason to attribute figures to that which is without figure, and forms to that which has no form ... is not sufficient.... They require some appropriate elevations and that which has some affinity with our nature, so that consequently we are capable of gaining ourselves the figurations, which are accessible for us.... But it must be said also that the thing which is hidden under unrevealed and sacred enigmas is suited most perfectly to the mysterious words, and to rendering inaccessible to most people, the holy and secret truth of the otherworldly spirits. For all persons are not saints, and, as scripture informs us, not all have knowledge (I Cor. 8:7).¹¹

The symbols provided by the celestial intelligences have, therefore, an educative role for those seeking greater knowledge of God. This process of contemplation is a simultaneous act of resistance to a complacency attached to matter, and it also involves a full engagement with the symbol itself, rather than a literal interpretation of the symbol.¹² By resistance to complacency, Pseudo-Dionysius meant that one must disengage the sensible images from all signification that is base or vulgar or simply natural which could alter or obscure the divine revelation borne by the images.¹³ The correct play of the

10. See R. Roques, "Introduction," in *La Hiérarchie Céleste*, xxi ff.

11. *De coel. hier.*, II.2, *La Hiérarchie Céleste*, 76–77.

12. Roques, "Introduction," xxi; A. Louth, *Denys the Areopagite* (Wilton, Conn., 1989) 46.

13. And see J. Derrida, "How to Avoid Speaking: Denials," in *Languages of the Unsayable. The Play of Negativity in Literature and Literary Theory*, ed. S. Budick and W. Iser, trans. K. Friedan (New York, 1989) 44: "A predicate can always conceal another predicate, or rather the nakedness of an absence of predicate—as the (sometimes indispensable) veil of a garment can at once dissimulate and reveal the very fact that it dissimulates and renders attractive at the same time. Hence the voice of an utterance can conceal another, which it then appears to quote without quoting it, presenting itself as another form, namely as a quotation of the other."

symbolism demands that the intelligence adhere openly and exclusively to the intelligible richness of the sensible images. This operation requires an effort of lucidity that discerns the true intelligible value of the image.¹⁴

The exigencies of catharsis and anagogy make humanity prefer the dissembling symbols to symbols that resemble.¹⁵ For the latter places humanity in danger of becoming attached to these things and therefore misled. With dissembling symbols, the effort of anagogy is almost inevitable and so there is no seduction or bonding. With these dissembling symbols of the angelic beings the means of interpretation is a prudent but difficult, and necessarily provisional, act of anagogy.

Every being, every element and every sensible quality can serve as a point of departure to intelligible contemplation and reveal some character of the celestial essences. The anthropomorphism of the angels is, properly speaking, a symbolic dissimulation. The angels take human form for symbolic reasons, that is, on account of humanity's powers of intellect.

But [the angels] are described in human form on account of [human] intelligence, and they have powers of sight directed upwards, and because [humans] have the upright ... form, and the ability to lead and command according to nature, [because humans live] the least according to sensation as opposed to the other powers that lead illogical lives, and [human nature] masters all of it by the strength of its spirit, and by the dominance of the logical knowledge, and according to the free and unfettered nature of [the human] soul.¹⁶

Each symbol, then, is accessible by an act of exegesis and imparts an amount of intelligible information according to the worth and effort of the person contemplating.¹⁷ The value and the level of the symbol

14. Roques, "Introduction," xxii.

15. *De coel. hier.*, II, *La Hiérarchie Céleste*, 73–87.

16. *De coel. hier.*, XV.3, *La Hiérarchie Céleste*, 171–73.

17. *De coel. hier.*, XV, *La Hiérarchie Céleste*, 163–91.

are bound to the value and the level of the intelligence that uses it. Symbols are, therefore, essentially “cursive” and “mobile,” varying according to the order and receptivity of the intelligence.¹⁸ Pseudo-Dionysius’s position is based on an openness to symbolic interpretation; indeed, his theology demands it.

The ultimate goal of this process of symbolic interpretation is the empty and obscure site of incomprehension, “the brilliant darkness of a hidden silence,” “the truly mysterious darkness of unknowing.”¹⁹ The goal of Pseudo-Dionysius’s negative theology has striking parallels with Evagrius’s desired state of “apatheia” ($\alpha\pi\alpha\theta\epsilon\iota\alpha$).²⁰ Evagrius stated that the proper preparation for true contemplation of God and things divine was a humble emptying of the mind of all emotion and thought, especially of the figural kind.²¹ Pure prayer and contemplation can thus be accomplished in theory but only after all contaminating sensual “images” have been vanquished. For Pseudo-Dionysius, prayer too is necessary, as “a passage, a transfer, a translation.”²² Silent contemplation of scriptural signs, “secret manifestations” of God, is the route to knowledge of transcendent reality.

The two processes of Evagrius and Pseudo-Dionysius share similar goals in silent, empty contemplation of God, but Evagrius’s absolute

18. Roques, “Introduction,” xc.

19. Respectively, *De divinis nominibus*, XIII.1, PG 3:977B, *The Complete Works*, trans. C. Luibheid and P. Rorem, 135; and *De mystica theologia*, I.3, PG 3:1001A, *The Complete Works*, trans. C. Luibheid and P. Rorem, 137. And see, in general, on the negative theology of Pseudo-Dionysius, R. Mortley, *From Word to Silence. Vol. II. The Way of Negation, Christian and Greek*, Theophaneia, vol. 31 (Bonn, 1986) 229ff.

20. It might be said that Maximus Confessor (ca. 580–662) was a natural heir to both of these Church Fathers, indicating that the two systems of thought were reconcilable. Maximus was largely responsible for the dissemination of Areopagite theology in the east; see J. Pelikan, “Introduction,” in Maximus Confessor, *Selected Writings* (New York, 1985) 6. And in his description of the spiritual life and of pure prayer, Maximus clearly owed a debt to Evagrius; see M. Viller, “Aux sources de la spiritualité de S. Maxime: les œuvres d’Evagre le Pontique,” *Revue d’ascétisme et de mystique* 11(1930):156–84, 239–68, 331–36.

21. See Clark, *The Origenist Controversy*, 83ff.

22. See, for example, *De div. nom.*, III.1, PG 3:680D. Quote in text from Derrida, “How to Avoid Speaking,” 41, and further: “Here prayer is not a preamble, an accessory mode of access. It constitutes an essential moment, it adjusts discursive asceticism, the passage through the desert of discourse, the apparent referential vacuity which will only avoid empty deliria and prattling by addressing itself from the start to the other, to you. But to you as ‘hyperessential and more than divine Trinity.’”

eschewing of signs and images as the steps to this goal is the point of departure from Pseudo-Dionysius's process of meditation on unknowable things. Pseudo-Dionysius marks a distinct path, therefore, in his simultaneous process of engagement with a symbol and denial of its literal worth. The path he described was widely influential in the sixth century and beyond. Indeed, the operations he describes influenced much of the theology developed in subsequent centuries, and later iconophile theories of devotion before material images clearly relied on Pseudo-Dionysius's description of approaches to divine things. Moreover, the influence of Pseudo-Dionysius was not restricted to abstract theological speculation; traces of his theology can also be discerned in actual practice as gleaned from a set of sixth-century epigrams.

Written about images of the Archangel Michael, these epigrams illustrate in a concrete way perceptions of images in the period immediately following Pseudo-Dionysius. They reveal a thematic thread linking Pseudo-Dionysius's theology concerning symbolic approaches to images of angels and perceptions of tangible material images. The theology and more popular understanding represented by these epigrams occupy the same conceptual ground: that an image makes material in a dissembling way an immaterial being for contemplative rather than descriptive purposes. This group of epigrams, therefore, parallels positions described in abstruse terms by iconophile theologians, and taken as a whole these different texts show a mode of gaining knowledge through images common to both theory and practice.

This small group of epigrams was composed as part of a larger anthology, gathered during the reign of Justin II, perhaps around 568, by Agathias (ca. 532–ca. 580).²³ Based on the antique model of the

23. See Alan Cameron, *The Greek Anthology from Meleager to Planudes* (Oxford, 1993) 16. However, R. C. McCail thought that this group of epigrams on images of angels originated outside of the cycle proper; see his "The Cycle of Agathias: New Identifications Scrutinised," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 89(1969):92ff. Furthermore, McCail dates the epigrams from a period ranging from 555 to 570, against Cameron who sees them as a coherent and contemporary group. See R. C. McCail, "On the Early Career of Agathias Scholasticus," *REB* 28(1970):142.

Garland written by Meleager (fl. ca. 60 B.C.E.), the epigrams were apparently written by a group of educated men on set topics and in similar styles. The collection is extant only because of a compilation made in about 900 by Constantine Cephalas. Its survival is of great importance as this cycle of epigrams provides remarkable evidence of attitudes to images of angels from the period preceding Iconoclasm.

In the first place, an image of the Archangel may be intended as a thank-offering for past benefit and as a request for future aid. Agathias wrote this epigram for an image of the Archangel at the Sosthenium near Constantinople:

Aemilanus of Caria and John with him, Rufinus of Alexandria and Agathias of Asia having completed the fourth year of their legal studies, O Archangel, dedicated to thee, O Blessed One, thy painted image, praying that their future may be happy. Make thyself manifest in the direction of their hopes.²⁴

The question of materiality is raised in this epigram to the extent that the Archangel's benign presence is beseeched through the lawyers' gift of depiction. The aim of materiality, the devotional goal of this epigram, is expressed more forcefully and more paradoxically in another epigram in the group. An epigram by Agathias on another image of the Archangel also expresses gratitude for the Archangel's intervention and protection but raises important issues of perception and depiction not brought up in the Sosthenium epigram:

24. *The Greek Anthology*, ed. W.R. Paton, 5 vols. (London, 1927) I:35. And see Averil Cameron, *Agathias* (Oxford, 1970) 5. Robin Cormack has discussed this epigram in connection with a newly discovered fresco from the theatre at Aphrodisias that he dates to the sixth century; see his "The Wall Painting of St. Michael in the Theatre," in *Aphrodisias Papers 2. The Theatre, a Sculptor's Workshop, Philosophers, and Coin Types*, ed. R. R. R. Smith and K. T. Erim (Ann Arbor, 1991) 115. And T.F. Mathews used this epigram to describe the creation of an "interior imprint" of a spiritual reality in the Byzantine viewer; however, he neglects the symbolic quality of likenesses of angels in favor of visual engagement and involvement. See his "Psychological Dimensions in the Art of Eastern Christendom," in *Art and Religion: Faith, Form and Reform, 1984 Paine Lectures in Religion*, ed. O. Overby (Columbia, Mo., 1986) 12ff.

“On a picture of Theodorus the Illustrious and twice Proconsul, in which he is shown receiving the insignia of office from the Archangel in Ephesus”: Forgive us, O Archangel, for picturing thee, for thy face is invisible; this is but an offering of men. For by thy grace Theodorus hath his girdle of a Magister, and twice won for his prize the Proconsular chair. The picture testifies to his gratitude, for in return he expressed the image of thy beauty.²⁵

The difficulty inherent in depicting the Archangel, and the referential quality that necessarily results in such depictions, is significant. Although the Archangel is by nature invisible, and in this way unperceivable, the image is made according to the means available to humanity. For this reason, the image is conditional and incomplete, but the image’s provisional quality, which the epigram states, is the crucial issue. The donor apologizes for the presumption of manufacturing an undepictable subject, since the image is only an approximation, but the image was made because the Archangel has made himself manifest, in some fashion, on the donor’s behalf. Commemorating the Archangel’s invisible guidance and protection, the image was clearly an emblem of angelic aid. The iconography of the Archangel—which one may safely assume was of the winged youth as celestial minister—is a sign for this watchful and benevolent presence.

The epigrams’ significant operation is the spiritual or intellectual contemplation that the material image initiates.²⁶ Agathias’s epigram

25. *The Greek Anthology*, I:36. See also P. Speck, “Ein Bild des Erzengels Michael in Ephesos (*Anthologia Palatina* I,36),” *Varia II, ΠΟΙΚΙΛΑ ΒΥΖΑΝΤΙΝΑ*, vol. 6 (Bonn, 1987) 355–62; and also Alan Cameron, *The Greek Anthology*, 72ff. and 152ff.

26. R.C. McCail, “The Erotic and Ascetic Poetry of Agathias Scholasticus,” *B* 41(1971):246, rightly questions Kitzinger’s view of the process of comprehension that Agathias describes. For Kitzinger, the viewer looks at the image “as if” the figure represented were there. See “The Cult of Images Before Iconoclasm,” 147 n268. Clearly, however, Agathias’s intellectual approach uses the image as a bridge over which one travels for knowledge and communication, not as an embodiment of the model. McCail also points out that Agathias’s formulation of the passage of honor from image to prototype relies on sound patristic foundations, like the statement of Basil of Caesarea (ca. 329–379), “ἡ τῆς εἰκόνας τιμὴ ἐπὶ τὸ πρωτότυπον διαβαίνει” (*De Spiritu Sancto*, XVIII, *Traité du Saint-Esprit*, SC vol. 17 bis, ed. B. Pruche [Paris, 1968] 406).

is significant in this regard since the image is explicitly said to incite the mind to a “higher contemplation” by means of the image’s colors.²⁷ Agathias’s description of approach is paralleled by a contemporary epigram of Nilus Scholasticus. Nilus is equally aware of the difficulties involved in the capturing of a likeness and notes the “daring” quality of representation: “‘On an image of the Archangel’: How daring it is to picture the incorporeal! But yet the image leads us up to spiritual recollection of celestial beings.”²⁸ The process by which the mind is ferried to higher contemplation is stated succinctly in this epigram. The image, Nilus and Agathias both assert, is not a representation of the form of the Archangel in any essential way, but only an approximation of the formless Archangel. But by this representation of an unviewable being the image allows the viewer to reflect on the being itself. In fact, the image maintains a tentative, intellectual proximity of the ineffable being, otherwise unknowable and unapproachable. The image gives Agathias’s “confused veneration” a focus and an object. The material image provides, therefore, a paradoxical ability to conduct through the eyes a lucid contemplation of the unviewable, incomprehensible Archangel.

These epigrams ought to be seen, moreover, in the context of the increasing number of formulations of art’s role in worship in the course of the sixth century. The anagogical function of images of angels as described in these epigrams parallels the function of images in Christian worship that Hypatius of Ephesus (d. ca. 541) describes in a letter written to Julian, bishop of Atramytium.²⁹ In Hypatius’s view, images should be admitted, albeit grudgingly, into Christian worship because they are a means by which the weaker and less spiri-

27. *The Greek Anthology*, I:34. On this epigram, see chapter 2.

28. *The Greek Anthology*, I:33.

29. See P.J. Alexander, “Hypatius of Ephesus: A Note on Worship in the Sixth Century,” *HTR* 45(1952):177–84, and S. Gero, “Hypatius of Ephesus on the Cult of Images,” in *Christianity, Judaism and Other Greco-Roman Cults. Studies for Morton Smith at Sixty*, 4 vols. (Leiden, 1975) II:208–16; and G. Lange, *Bild und Wort. Die katechetischen Funktionen des Bildes in der griechischen Theologie des sechsten bis neunten Jahrhunderts*, Würzburg, 1969, 44ff. The text is found in F. Diekamp, *Analecta patristica. Texte und Abhandlungen zur griechischen Patristik*, Orientalia christiana analecta, vol. 117 (Rome, 1938) 127ff., and in H. Thümmel, *Die Frühgeschichte der oskirchlichen Bilderlehre. Texte und Untersuchungen zur Zeit vor dem Bilderstreit*, TU vol. 139 (Berlin, 1992) 320–21.

tually advanced in the community might come to some introductory knowledge of divine things. For this reason, Hypatius told his correspondent, he shuns material aids, but admits images into worship,

... because we permit each order of the faithful to be guided and led up to the divine being in a manner appropriate to it [the order] because we think that some people are guided even by these [gold, silver, etc.] towards the intelligible beauty and from the abundant light in the sanctuaries to the intelligible and immaterial light.³⁰

Hypatius also stated that the cherubim on the Ark of the Covenant were one example of God's providence condescending for the sake of the weaker members of his chosen people; in this way, God gave material guidance to know him better.³¹ The anagogical function of images as described in this letter bears striking similarities to the epigrams discussed above, and also in a general way to the neo-Platonism of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite.³² These texts describe the spiritual elevation to divinity that signs, material and verbal, can provide for Christians. Yet Hypatius clearly saw a dichotomy between more advanced spirituality and the less perfect that depends upon these material signs, which Pseudo-Dionysius does not distinguish.

Evidently, sixth-century ecclesiastics and laymen alike, taking Hypatius and Agathias as examples, were grappling with the function and meaning of images in Christian worship. Hypatius was clearly

30. Diekamp, *Analecta patristica*, 128.26–30; trans. Alexander, “Hypatius of Ephesus,” 180.

31. Alexander, “Hypatius of Ephesus,” 179–80. The example of the cherubim presages the iconophile emphasis on God's prescription for the construction of the Ark and the cherubim; see below.

32. Kitzinger thought the theology of Pseudo-Dionysius an important factor in the formulation of image theory such as Hypatius expounded in this letter to Julian. See “The Cult of Images Before Iconoclasm,” 137–38. Jean Gouillard, “Hypatios d’Éphèse ou du Pseudo-Denys à Théodore Studite,” *REB* 19(1961):72ff., was also struck by the coincidence in thought regarding symbolism and ascent to higher mysteries in both Hypatius and Pseudo-Dionysius. However, Gero sees only a general knowledge of platonic concepts in Hypatius, and concluded that Hypatius was drawing from the same well without direct dependence on Pseudo-Dionysius. See “Hypatius of Ephesus on the Cult of Images,” 211–12.

ambivalent on the ultimate value of images but open-minded and willing to admit the usefulness of images in Christian pedagogy. Slightly later, Agathias is quite certain of the purpose of images in the elevation of the Christian mind toward divine things. The use of images as a means by which the worshipper remembers and venerates the person depicted is also a theme of the anti-Jewish literature of the seventh century, and it becomes a standard response to accusations of idolatry from non-Christians and iconoclasts alike. Pseudo-Athanasius, for instance, wrote that Christians do not honor the icons themselves, “But we only show forth our soul’s condition ($\sigma\chi\epsilon\sigma\tau\nu$) and love toward the form seen on the icon.”³³ And in his *Disputatio adversus Judaeos*, Anastasius Sinaïtes (d. ca. 700) said that Christians honor and imitate Christ and the saints through a material image as the Jews honor the power of the word through a material book.³⁴

The epigrams of Agathias and Nilus take a similar position with regard to honor passing to the prototype. They also show in their emphasis on “higher contemplation” of incomprehensible angels certain affinities with philosophical ideas associated with pagan neo-Platonism. For example, the language used by Porphyry (ca. 232–ca. 303) to rationalize the worship of pagan statues in his treatise

33. *Quaestiones ad Antiochum ducem*, XXXIX, PG 28:621B–D. See also Leontius of Neapolis, preserved in the writings of John of Damascus, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos. III Contra imaginum calumniatores orationes tres*, PTS vol. 17, ed. P.B. Kotter (Berlin, 1975) 156–58; V. Deroche, “L’Apologie contre les Juifs de Léontios de Néapolis,” *TM* 12(1994):79ff.; *On the Divine Images. Three Apologies Against Those Who Attack the Divine Images*, trans. D. Anderson (Crestwood, N.Y., 1980) 41–42; *Trophies of Damascus (Les Trophées de Damas*, PO vol. 15/2, ed. G. Bardy [Paris, 1920; rp. Louvain, 1973] 78.11ff.); the Armenian John Mayragometsi (S. Der Nersessian, “Une apologie des images du septième siècle,” *B* 17[1944/5]:60; and the Dialogue between the Jews, Papiscus and Philo, and a Monk (*Dialogue between a Christian and a Jew entitled ANTIBΟΛΗ ΠΑΠΙΣΚΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΦΙΛΩΝΟΥ ΙΟΤΔΑΙΩΝ ΠΡΟΣ ΜΟΝΑΧΟΝ ΤΙΝΑ*, ed. A.C. McGiffert [Marburg, 1889] 51–52).

See Lange, *Bild und Wort*, 188ff., K.A. Corrigan, *Visual Polemics in the Ninth-Century Byzantine Psalters* (Cambridge, 1992) 40ff., and V. Deroche, “L’authenticité de l’Apologie contre les Juifs de Léontios de Néapolis,” *Bulletin de correspondance hellénique* 110(1986):661ff.

34. PG 89:1233C–6A. John Mayragometsi compares the ink used to write scripture and the pigments used to depict the saints. See Der Nersessian, “Une apologie des images du septième siècle,” 66–67.

“Concerning Idols” is closer to the epigrams’ conception of images of angels than the down-to-earth polemic of texts against Jews. Porphyry stated that pagan statues are simply wood and stone, but also images suited for human perception through which the learned are able to comprehend the deity.³⁵ This formulation of the use of images for gaining knowledge of transcendent beings is a clear forerunner of the philosophical defense of images of the sixth-century epigrams.³⁶ As he may well have been Macarius Magnes’s “opponent” in the *Apocriticus*, Porphyry’s views on symbolic images are directly relevant here. One can clearly discern in this pagan-Christian dialogue of the fourth century the beginnings of the later disagreement between neo-Platonic ideas of symbolic images and intellectual, non-material worship.³⁷ In fact, the differences between Porphyry and Macarius Magnes seen in that dialogue can be taken as emblematic

35. See J. Bidez, *Vie de Porphyre. Le philosophe néoplatonicien* (Gand and Leipzig, 1913; rp. Hildesheim and New York, 1980) 143ff., text 1[°]–23[°], F. Börtzler, *Porphyrius’ Schrift von den Götterbildern* (Erlangen, 1908) and C. Clerc, *Les théories relatives au culte des images chez les auteurs grecs du II^e siècle après J.-C.* (Paris, 1915) 253ff. The text on pagan statues is preserved in the third book of Eusebius of Caesarea’s *Praeparatio Evangelica*, GCS vol. 43, 2d ed., ed. K. Mras (Berlin, 1975). The connection between pagan defense of statues and Christian defense of image worship was noted by A. Grabar, *L’iconoclasm byzantin. Dossier archéologique* (Paris, 1957) 138ff., and P.J. Alexander, *The Patriarch Nicephorus of Constantinople. Ecclesiastical Policy and Image Worship in the Byzantine Empire* (Oxford, 1958) 27ff.

36. See Lange, *Bild und Wort*, 182ff. Leslie Brubaker, “Icons Before Iconoclasm?” in *Morfologie sociali e culturali in Europa fra tarda antichità e alto medioevo*, Settimane vol. 45, 2 vols. (Spoleto, 1998) II:1226–27, 1231, argues for the increased importance of the transparent image in the mid-sixth century, but a case can surely be made for continuity of this idea in Late Antiquity.

37. A. Harnack, *Kritik des Neuen Testaments von einem griechischen Philosophen des 3. Jahrhunderts. Die in Apocriticus des Macarius Magnes enthaltene Streitschrift*, TU vol. 37/3 (Leipzig, 1911); G. Bardy, in *DTC IX*:1459. Macarius’s opponent defended pagan statues in this way: “Since it is then acknowledged that the angels share in the divine nature, those that make proper reverence to the respected gods do not think that it is the god, the image that is fashioned out of wood or stone or bronze, nor if some portion of the image should be cut off, do they believe that a portion of God’s power is subtracted. It should be called to mind that the images and temples were constructed by the ancients, that on account of coming hither the believers were brought to remembrance of God, when they go there, and being purified generally and offering devotion and supplication, and for what things they desired they asked from the gods. For even if someone makes an image of a friend, certainly one does not think that his friend is in it nor does one think that a part of the body is enclosed in the sections of the representation, but honour for the friend is shown through the image” (Blondel 200.12–22).

as the conceptual differences generally separating the defenders and opponents of images of angels under discussion in this study. The writers of the epigrams were clearly influenced by neo-Platonic ideas on images in their emphasis on the ascent of the mind to a higher reality through matter; in particular, Pseudo-Dionysius provided these writers with a suitably Christian framework for these neo-Platonic concepts. While these writers of the sixth-century epigrams, as well as Hypatius of Ephesus, have real affinities with the anti-Jewish theologians of the seventh century, they used more rarefied and subtle descriptions of intellectual processes involved in viewing images derived from direct contact with neo-Platonist ideas.³⁸

Agathias's epigrams are also marked by an element of defensiveness that leads one to think that the place of images in worship and devotion was not resolved in every Christian's mind. Images had been perceived more and more as incontrovertible proofs and venerable recollections by some Christians,³⁹ but the opposition discussed in the previous chapter reveals that certain church officials resisted with equal force the use of images in worship.⁴⁰ In this context, Agathias was not alone in seeing the representation of angels as "daring." And in the sixth century, John of Gaza also wrote of the undaunted artists who strove to depict such bodiless beings. In his description of paintings in a bath house at Gaza, John describes the artists as "boiling with boldness" and "made drunk in mind" in delineating the

38. The relation between pagan apologetics, such as Porphyry's defense of images, and Byzantine image theory was described with great economy by N. H. Baynes, "Idolatry and the Early Church," in his *Byzantine and Other Studies* (London, 1955) 116–43.

39. For example, A.D. Kartsonis, in *Anastasis. The Making of an Image* (Princeton, 1986) 58–59, discusses Anastasius Sinaïtes's view that images are theological proofs that cannot be falsified. Also, Canon 82 of the Council of Trullo (692) stated a belief in the ability of art to express truths about the divinity and incarnation of Christ: "in order that the perfect should be set down before everybody's eyes even in painting, we decree that [the figure of] the Lamb, Christ our God, who removes the sins of the world, should henceforward be set up in human form on images also, in the place of the ancient lamb, inasmuch as we comprehend thereby the sublimity of the humiliation of God's Word, and are guided to the recollection of His life in flesh, His Passion and His salutary Death and the redemption which has thence accrued to the world." See Mansi XI:977BC; trans. C. Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire. 312–1453. Sources and Documents* (Toronto, 1986) 139–40.

40. See Kitzinger, "The Cult of Images in the Age Before Iconoclasm," 139, and McCail, "The Erotic and Ascetic Poetry of Agathias Scholasticus," 241ff.

heavenly powers, that is “to lend body to bodiless nature.”⁴¹ Clearly, in the minds of some Christians, representing angels existed as an issue that was propelled by material images on view and in devotion. The embodying of angelic powers, begun in Christian art as early as the second century, remained an issue into the sixth century and grew in importance as images became increasingly prominent in cult practice. The issue of how one came to knowledge of angelic beings persisted as an element in the debates over worship and images of the period preceding Iconoclasm, and drew particular attention when the debates reached a head in the mid-eighth century as iconophile theologians turned their attention to the theory and practice of devotion to images.

THE ICONOPHILE THEORY OF SYMBOLIC IMAGES OF ANGELS

Commentary on images of angels did not appear again until the eighth-/ninth-century iconophile defense arose in reaction to the iconoclastic attack on religious images. The elaborate defense of images arose as circumstances demanded, but the striking parallels between iconophile theology and the epigrams discussed above must be seen as a sign of continuity in basic approach to images of angels. In the debates over worship and symbolism that were central to the development of Byzantine theology in the sixth and seventh centuries, a consistent feature was an acceptance of images of angels as means, albeit partial, to a comprehension of God’s spiritual servants. Dependent on earlier writings, iconophile theology is the most comprehen-

41. See P. Friedländer, *Johannes von Gaza und Paulus Silentarius. Kunstbeschreibungen justinianischer Zeit* (Leipzig and Berlin, 1912; rp. Hildesheim and New York, 1969) 135.12–136.25. Abstract theological concepts, like the Trinity, are also depicted in this program. According to John of Gaza, a cross within three concentric circles referred to the Trinity. See Friedländer, *Johannes von Gaza und Paulus Silentarius*, 137.41–138.44; and H. Maguire, *Earth and Ocean. The Terrestrial World in Early Byzantine Art* (University Park and London, 1987) 12–13, 20–21. This symbolic mode of depicting the Trinity parallels Philoxenus’s scruples concerning depiction of the Holy Spirit, as discussed in the previous chapter; see McCail, “The Erotic and Ascetic Poetry of Agathias Scholasticus,” 245, who speculated that the misgivings of Philoxenus of Mabbug, Severus of Antioch and John of Gaza concerning images of angels may have derived from the influence of the Christian university at Gaza.

sive treatment of the significance of such images in worship, and because of its articulation and extensiveness this image theory needs detailed examination. Moreover, theory helps shed light on the meaning of the ninth-century restoration of the mosaics of the angelic powers in the Church of the Dormition at Nicaea (Iznik), and this chapter ends by examining these mosaics with regard to the exchange between word and image.

That images could lead viewers from the visible to knowledge of the invisible, however incomplete, was a primary defense of images for iconophiles.⁴² The faculty of sight was a necessary element in iconophile justifications of images in worship, and, although the ultimate goal was to transcend the material assistance that images afforded, vision was defined as a fundamental means of facilitating

42. For instance, in the eighth-century *Adversus Constantinum Caballinum*, the process is set out in one passage in the form of a fictional dialogue between an iconophile and an iconoclast. In the dialogue, the iconophile rhetorically asks the iconoclast how he himself would teach a stranger all the mysteries of their faith. The iconophile protests that one cannot be led to the higher mysteries of the invisible things without some kind of material prop or demonstration, “For if you said to him, ‘It is invisible,’ what has he seen that he should put trust in your conscience and faith?” The first thing one must do is build on sensible things so that in this way, little by little, one is led to invisible things. The didactic function of the material image is clearly emphasized in this passage, since the education and conversion of the stranger is accomplished by means of the images themselves. See *Adversus Constantinum Caballinum*, X, PG 95:325C–8B, and also P. Speck, *Ich bin's nicht, Kaiser Konstantin ist es gewesen. Die Legenden vom Einfluss des Teufels, des Juden und des Moslem auf den Ikonoklasmus. ΠΟΙΚΙΛΑ ΒΥΖΑΝΤΙΝΑ*, vol. 10 (Bonn, 1990) 402. The text begins this way: “You take him into the church. You reveal to him the world which surrounds him. You open up for him the forms of the figures of the holy icons. This unbeliever sees and he says, ‘Who is this crucified? Who is this rising and who is trampling upon the head of this old man?’ Do you not teach him from the icons, saying, ‘This crucified man, he is the son of God, who was crucified for the sins of the world? This risen man, it is he who raises the forefather of the world, Adam, who fell because of disobedience, and he went into Hades, where he was held these many years kept in chains and by unbreakable bars in these nether regions?’ And in this way do you lead this man in to the knowledge of God. Again, you lead him to the font of the baptistery. And he sees only water in the font, you the faithful one behold the water, and see light and spirit. When he has partaken of baptism, then he takes the truth from the senses, and applies them to the invisible ungenerated. If you offer the mystery of the body and blood of the Saviour, he sees bread and wine only. And you see the body and blood of Christ which flows from the undefiled source. And if he becomes worthy, he partakes with you.” On this text, see also M.-F. Auzépy, “L’*Adversus Constantinum Caballinum* et Jean de Jérusalem,” *BS* 56(1995):323–38.

knowledge. John of Damascus (ca. 675–ca. 750), for instance, was strongly in favor of the comprehension that comes through the faculty of sight: “Sensation is the strength of the soul returned from matter, and therefore discernment. Sensory moreover are the organs.... The first sense is sight.”⁴³ Hearing and the other faculties follow in descending order of importance. John of Damascus was the first great opponent of iconoclastic doctrine and for that was anathematized at the iconoclastic council of Hiereia in 754. John of Damascus’s image theory was perhaps not as sophisticated as that of such later opponents of iconoclasm as Nicephorus (ca. 750–828), Theodore of Stoudios (759–826) and Photius (ca. 810–d. after 893), but almost all the arguments regarding angels found in these ninth-century theologians can be seen in some form in John of Damascus’s work. Through John of Damascus, the general reliance on the theology of Pseudo-Dionysius is evident in iconophile theory. As John and other iconophiles stated, images may serve as sensible symbols, as Pseudo-Dionysius put it, that lead the worshipper to comprehension of the divine, because of the particular qualities of the sense of the sight.

43. *Expositio fidei*, II.18, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos. II Expositio fidei*, PTS vol. 12, ed. P.B. Kotter (Berlin, 1973) 83–84. John of Damascus is typical, in this way, of iconophile stress on the importance of the sense of sight. For instance, the author of the *Adversus Constantinum Caballinum*, again, is explicit about the importance of sight and images for convincing the viewer of the truth and magnitude of doctrine; the means is again an engagement with an “iconic imprint,” but with real emotional compulsion. See VIII, PG 95:324C–5A. The Second Council of Nicaea in 787 was equally explicit about the role of the images and sight in spiritual development. The Fathers of the Council stated that the outlines and the representations of the apostles, martyrs, saints and holy persons are there “so we are led to remember, attend, and participate in their holiness.” See Mansi XIII:132E. Elsewhere it is stated that hearing of the appearance of the angel to the Virgin we call the event to mind, and yet “seeing the icon in this way we consider the consequences of the thing more manifestly.” See Mansi XIII:269C. And, finally, Nicephorus defended visual perception but in a more “scholastic” way, according to his method of discourse, “For we all know that sight is the most honoured and necessary of the senses and it may allow apprehension of what falls under perception more distinctly and sharply; for ‘it is the nature of that which is heard to travel less quickly than that which is seen,’ and seeing will attract faster than the other senses since it also has the attractive power to a larger degree.” See *Refutatio et eversio*, 119, *Nicephori patriarchae constantinopolitani Refutatio et eversio definitio-nis synodalis anni 815*, Corpus Christianorum. Series Graeca, vol. 33, ed. J. Featherstone (Louvain, 1997) 211,56–62, trans. Alexander, *The Patriarch Nicephorus of Constantinople*, 211.

If iconophiles considered the anagogical and didactic function of images to be securely established, they needed to address other equally pressing iconoclastic accusations. In particular, Christological issues, which iconoclasts had already raised, became central for iconophiles;⁴⁴ and images of angels were used primarily as supports for the iconophile position on representing Christ. If this central Christological issue was the reason for the introduction of angels into these arguments, defense of images of angels soon diverged from the Christological path into new territory. It will become clear in the course of this chapter that this divergence occurred because of Christ's earthly life which the angels could not share.

In John of Damascus's theology, which typifies iconophile writing, Christ's life incarnate is the primary justification for representation. In turn, the incarnation had renewed a bond between God and humanity and initiated a new dispensation that images of Christ assert. The angels were brought into these arguments because they too appeared on earth and were apprehended in time and place. Description of the means by which their formless and immaterial nature was apprehended is the point at which justification of their images parts from the defense of Christ's images.

Important for the defense of Christ's representability was the definition of circumscription. The opponents of images had equated circumscription and painting so that the two were inseparable. This equation effectively ruled out the possibility of making images of Christ since the making of an image would presume that an essential aspect of the subject had been captured. And for God who is ineffable, capturing any part of his essence on an image is clearly impossible: God is simply uncircumscribable. From the beginning, then, the iconophile counterattack was centered on the definition of circumscription as distinct from painting, and circumscription, therefore, became a primary support in iconophile theory for the ability to represent spiritual beings.

44. Christology was central for western image theory, too, although anagogy was not a prescribed method of viewing. See H. L. Kessler, "Real Absence: Early Medieval Art and the Metamorphosis of Vision," in *Morfologie sociali e culturali in Europa fra tarda antichità e alto medioevo*, Settimane vol. 45, 2 vols. (Spoleto, 1998) II:1157–1213.

John of Damascus first discussed circumscription as a chief defense for the representations of Christ.⁴⁵ Angels were invoked and discussed in this connection in order to support the Christological argument for images. Angels substantiated the depiction of Christ because they are intellectual and bodiless, but apprehended in time and space, and thus circumscribable. Despite their nature, therefore, they can be depicted. John of Damascus wrote:

They are circumscribable. For when they are in heaven they are not on earth; and when they are sent to earth by God, they do not remain in heaven. They are not bound by walls or doors or keys or seals. For they are unbounded. I say that they are invisible; for not as they are do they appear to the worthy to whom God desires that they appear, but they see [the angels] altered, just as they are able to perceive. For only [God] is truly unbounded, only he is uncreated. For all creation is made finite by being created by God.⁴⁶

However, angels have particular problems attendant upon their nature since they have no visible form and change according to the situation:

God created them in his own image, of nature bodiless, wind, as it were, or immaterial fire, as the divine David said, “[God] who

45. *Orationes de imaginibus tres*, II.5, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*. III, 71–72; *On the Divine Images*, trans. Anderson, 52–53: “If we attempted to make an image of the invisible God, this would be sinful indeed. It is impossible to portray one who is without body: invisible, uncircumscribed, and without form. Again if we made images of humans and believed them to be gods, and adored them as if they were so, we would be truly impious. We do neither of these things. But we are not mistaken if we make the image of God incarnate, who was seen on earth in the flesh, associated with humanity, and in his unspeakable goodness assumed the nature, feeling, form, and colour of our flesh. For we yearn to see how he looked, as the apostle says, ‘Now we see through a glass darkly’ (I Cor. 13:12). Now the icon is also a dark glass, fashioned according to the limitations of our physical nature.”

46. *Exp. fid.*, II.3, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*. II, 45. And also, “Physical things which have shape, bodies which are circumscribed, and have colour, are suitable subjects for image-making. Nevertheless, even if nothing physical or fleshly may be attributed to an angel, or a soul, or a demon, it is still possible to depict and circumscribe them according to their nature. For they are intellectual beings, and are believed to be present invisibly and to operate spiritually” (*De imag. or.*, III.24, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*. III, 130–31; *On the Divine Images*, trans. Anderson, 78).

maketh his angels spirits; his ministers a flaming fire” (Ps. 104:4). [And he made them] ethereal, and ardent, and fervent, and incisive, and penetrating, according to the divine will, calling them servants, and ascendent, and free from all knowledge of material things.⁴⁷

According to John of Damascus, the angels are intellects, ceaselessly moving, who are in places which are intelligible. But their nature is such that they cannot be circumscribed corporeally, he said, as they are not formed corporeally by nature, nor are they three dimensional. Rather, they appear and perform intellectually where they are commanded to be by God, and nowhere else.⁴⁸ Unlike Christ they have no stable, earthly form, and yet, since they are still within the boundaries of John of Damascus’s definition of circumscription, they may be depicted. John of Damascus’s definition depends largely on the ability of the angels to occupy place, that is, to be corporeal enough to have limit and circumference:

And the angel while he is contained in a place somatically, has form and outline. It is said that he is in a place, because he is present intellectually and operates according to his nature, and is not elsewhere, but is circumscribed in that way intellectually, there in that place where he operates. For it is not possible according to this for him to operate in different places. Only God can operate everywhere at once. And the angel, quick by nature, and traveling speedily and readily, operates in different places. God being ubiquitous and over everything, by this operates differently by a single, simple operation.⁴⁹

It is characteristic of angelology, and iconophiles were no exception, that the distinction between God and his messengers must be maintained, as well as the discrimination of the nature of humanity and of the angels.

47. *Exp. fid.*, II.3, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos. II*, 45.

48. *Exp. fid.*, II.3, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos. II*, 47.

49. *Exp. fid.*, I.13, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos. II*, 38.

Therefore the angel is an intellectual being in perpetual motion, of free will, bodiless, serving God, having received an immortal nature according to grace, of which nature the form and definition is known only to the Creator. It is said that an angel is bodiless and immaterial but only in relation to us. For everything measured against God, who alone is incomparable, is found base and material. God alone is naturally immaterial and bodiless.⁵⁰

Because they share some spiritual characteristics with the divine nature, however, angels were useful parallels for the entry of Christ into the world. This parallel supported the iconophile contention that divinity can be represented because it had appeared on earth. Angels occupy the middle area—as a kind of third body—in nature somewhere between God and humanity, but with a nature not fully determinable. If beings as immaterial and unparticipating as the angels can be circumscribed and depicted, then Christ incarnate should surely be circumscribed as human, and depicted as such.

The notion of circumscribability of the angels was derived from a context not properly concerned with iconophile theology nor properly speaking with Christology, but rather with the problematic nature and role of the angels.⁵¹ John of Damascus's innovation was to

50. *Exp. fid.*, II.3, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*. II, 45.

51. For instance, Gennadius of Marseilles, who died between 492 and 505, wrote that all creatures are to some extent corporeal, even the intellectual creatures of God. The proof of this is that all these creatures can be circumscribed in place, just as the soul which is enclosed in flesh and the demons who are in nature similar to the angels. Only God however is truly incorporeal and invisible by nature. God is rightly thought to be incorporeal because he is everywhere and infuses all creation with his presence (*De ecclesiasticis dogmatibus*, XI, *PL* 58:984A).

And in the fifth century, Faustus Rhegiensis wrote in a similar vein, “I would not even doubt that the angels are in places, who are certainly now compassed by the heavens, now borne by the empty space of the ether, now descending to earth; who the divine sermon describes in the vision of the patriarch ascending and descending, at any rate as if they were not in one place; but they are not able to be present everywhere and by ascent and descent depart. The most blessed Gabriel himself, who is known to stand before God himself, when he announced to Mary that the Lord was to be mingled with flesh, and when he assisted the mother under divine vigilance, without a doubt he was not in heaven, he was not flying somewhere over Mary, and he was not filling that great diffuse emptiness of the endless ether, but he was occupying that place, in which he was. Since it is like that, anything that occupies space is a body, how could someone not be confined to a place who is sent from

recognize the angels and their circumscription as a positive support for Christ's circumscription. The link with these qualities of circumscription and the making of images had not yet been developed to the same degree as it would be by ninth-century theologians, but the essential link had been made by John of Damascus a century or so previously.

The iconophiles arrived at a conclusion concerning the relation of angels' images to their bodiless models by examining art authorized and produced under the Old Covenant. They established an iconophile argument of the divinely ordained worship of images, and the relation of image and prototype that God himself stated, by referring to God's commands to Moses in Exodus. Iconoclasts had cited God's injunction not to make graven images (Ex. 20:4) as an argument against Christian images at the first stage of Iconoclasm in the second quarter of the eighth century. This charge, and the iconophile response, is not particular to the Iconoclast controversy but was an extension of the pagan-Jewish "debates," as argued in such seventh-century anti-Jewish texts of Stephen of Bostra and Leontius of Neapolis.⁵² Indeed, John of Damascus cited both these theologians in his treatise directed against the attackers of images.⁵³

place to place, and as if the body is transported by movement and ascent, descends with effort, moves with mobility, goes, returns, is remote, and descends again" (*Epistolae*, III, in *Fausti Reiensis Praeter sermones pseudo-eusebianos opera*, Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum, vol. 21, ed. A. Engelbrecht [Prague, Vienna and Leipzig, 1891] 178).

The issue of circumscription continued to be discussed throughout the Byzantine period in examinations of angels' nature and their role in the cosmic hierarchy. For instance, see Nicetas Stethatos (1005?–ca. 1090), in *Opuscules et lettres*, SC vol. 81, ed. J. Darrouzès (Paris, 1961) 252, and Symeon of Thessalonike (d. 1429), *Responsa ad Gabrielem Pentapolitanum*, III, PG 155:841A.

52. See Corrigan, *Visual Polemics*, 33ff.

53. Stephen of Bostra in *De imag. or.*, III.71–73, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*. III, 174. See also G. Mercati, *Opere minori*, Studi e testi, vol. 76 (Vatican City, 1937) 202–206, and A. Alexakis, "Stephen of Bostra: *Fragmenta Contra Judaeos* (CPG 7790). A New Edition," *JöB* 43(1993):45–60, text at 51ff.

Leontius of Neapolis in *De imag. or.*, III.84–89, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*. III, 178–81, Déroche, "L'*Apologie contre les Juifs*," 79ff. Leontius was also cited at Nicaea II; see Mansi XIII:44B ff., and Déroche, "L'*Apologie contre les Juifs*," 66ff.

See also the seventh-century Armenian defense of John Mayragometsi, in Der Nersessian, "Une apologie des images du septième siècle," 59.

The cherubim, as paradigms of angelic beings, occupy a central place in iconophile rationalizations of images, and angels generally become implicated in these rationalizations because of the cherubim's prominent role in the iconophile version of the Christian history of art. The responses of both the Christian combatants in these anti-Jewish texts and the iconophile theologians directly implicate images of angels and so brought the example of the cherubim to the fore in iconophile responses. The iconophile rebuttal, as in the anti-Jewish texts, was to cite scripture in return, principally God's command to Moses to construct the Ark of the Covenant (Ex. 25:22): "And there will I meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat from between the two cherubims which are upon the Ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel." God's specific command for the Ark, with lengthy, explicit instructions on its manufacture, was presented as a typology of Christian art. John of Damascus cited the tabernacle as an injunction for the creation of material images for Christians, and he introduced Bezaleel as the archetypical artist inspired by the spirit of God. John of Damascus referred to Exodus (31:1–5) for support:

And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, See, I have called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah: and I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, to devise cunning works, to work in gold, and in silver and in brass, and in cutting of stones for setting, and in carving of timber, to work in all manner of workmanship.

And John of Damascus continued by citing the gathering of the material for Moses's construction of the Ark (Ex. 35:4–10), and then rhetorically asked if this manufacture of images was not done according to God's will: "Behold the handiwork of humanity becoming the likeness of the cherubim! How can you make the law a reason for refusing to do what the law itself commands?" He concluded that be-

cause Christ had become human the ancient commandment against idols had been annulled.⁵⁴

The cherubim were directly mentioned by God in his specifications for the Ark (Ex. 25:18–20), and the cherubim were the most important example for iconophiles generally of an explicit command by God to produce figured images.⁵⁵ Nicephorus used the artistic typology of the Ark as a sign of the divine origins of image making. The cherubim that were placed upon the Ark, in this way, became for Nicephorus a primary focus in the argument for images deriving from scriptural precedent. Moreover, Nicephorus in his discussion of the cherubim used them as the paradigms of the nature of angelic beings. The cherubim were placed high in his heavenly hierarchy by the necessity of his argument, in a position which is closest to God in station and image. At certain points in his discussion of cherubim, Nicephorus skated dangerously close to heretical angelology since Christ was seriously underestimated as the principal agent of mediation between God and humanity.⁵⁶

Yet the consequent immateriality of the cherubim's nature was another way for Nicephorus to bridge the gap between the difficulty of

54. *De imag. or.*, I.16, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*. III, 92; *On the Divine Images*, trans. Anderson, 25. And see also, in the same vein, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*. III, 96–101. And on the question of the Tabernacle and the iconophile defense of images, see S. Dufrenne, “Une illustration ‘historique,’ inconnue, du Psautier du Mont-Athos, Pantocrator No. 61,” *CA* 15(1965):83–95, H. L. Kessler, “Through the Temple Veil: The Holy Image in Judaism and Christianity,” *Kairos* 32/33(1990/1):6off., and Corrigan, *Visual Polemics*, 33ff.

55. For a use of the cherubim to underpin iconophile arguments, beyond those discussed *infra*, see *The Letter of the Three Patriarchs to Emperor Theophilus and Related Texts*, ed. J. A. Munitiz, J. Chrysostomides, E. Harvalia-Crook and Ch. Dendrinos (Camberley, 1997) 33.5–16 (7.e).

The cherubim were also a concern of western programmers and theologians. See L. Nees, “Image and Text: Excerpts from Jerome’s ‘De Trinitate’ and the *Maiestas Domini* Miniature of the Gundohinus Gospels,” *Viator* 18(1987):11–17, A. Grabar, “Les mosaïques de Germigny-des-Prés,” in his *L’art de la fin de l’Antiquité et du Moyen Âge*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1968) II:995–1006, and A. Freeman, “Theodulf of Orleans and the *Libri Carolini*,” *Speculum* 32(1957):663–705.

56. See V.N. Giannopoulos, “Η περὶ ἄγγελων διδασκαλία τοῦ Πατριαρχοῦ καὶ Ὁμολογητοῦ Νικηφόρου Α’ (+829),” *Θεολογία* 44(1973):328. On Nicephorus's angelology, see also J. Travis, *In Defense of the Faith. The Theology of Patriarch Nikephoros of Constantinople* (Brookline, Mass., 1984) 30–43.

apprehension, which might seem to be incompatible with circumscription, and the fact of representation as commanded by God himself. The quality of the cherubim, and the rest of the angelic hierarchy, is such that humanity is incapable of perceiving them directly; their true nature is unviewable.⁵⁷ And yet God has allowed them, by means of a divine condescension, to be depicted in a “terrestrial impression.”⁵⁸ These “impressions” are clearly distinct from Christ’s own appearance on earth in which he was really made flesh and suffered as a human being.⁵⁹ In this view, images of angels are transcriptions of angelic appearances in a dissimulating way; they denote only the symbolic condescension and alteration of form for inferior human perception.

Aware of the distinctions between images of angels and Christ, John of Damascus and Nicephorus and other iconophile theologians were compelled to rationalize the obvious disjuncture between angels’ formlessness and their form on images. John of Damascus described the mutability of the angels in this way, “Therefore [the angelic nature] is a logical nature, both intellectual and autonomous, changeable at will or inclination.”⁶⁰ And also, “They are transformed for such things as the Lord God wills, and in this way they appear to humanity and reveal holy mysteries to it.”⁶¹ Despite the fact that the angels are changeable, unpredictable and ultimately un-

57. *Apologeticus pro sacris imaginibus*, 70, PG 100:769A, “For you might say somehow like this, as we know well, that the godly cherubim since they are invisible by nature, are scarcely perceptible by humanity.”

58. Humanity is incapable of seeing intelligible beings like the angels directly, and out of his beneficence God has commanded, “that the most blessed aspects of the heavenly powers are made manifest in symbolic impressions” (*Apol. pro sac. imag.*, 70, PG 100:777C). Furthermore the command given to Moses in Ex. 25:40 is an example of God’s providence. The cherubim mediate “the beneficent progressions of divine providence to others positioned below them and take on likenesses because of the function they perform, and in these, which are likenesses made on earth, are allowed due to divine condescension” (*Apol. pro sac. imag.*, 70, PG 100:776A).

59. On the opacity of images of Christ for Theodore of Stoudios, see G. Peers, “Breathless, Speechless Images: On the Chalke Gate Epigram,” in *Hommages Margaret Head Thomson*, Cahiers des études anciennes, vol. 32, ed. L. Finnête and A. P. Booth (Trois Rivières, Québec, 1998) 111–12.

60. *Exp. fid.*, II.3, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*. II, 45.

61. *Exp. fid.*, II.3, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*. II, 47.

knowable, John of Damascus justified their images as allusive and symbolic signs.

God wills that we should not be totally ignorant of bodiless creatures, and so he clothed them with forms and shapes, and used images comprehensible to our nature, material forms which could be seen by the spiritual nature of the mind. From these we make images and representations, for how else could the cherubim be shown as having form?⁶²

According to John of Damascus, images of angels are made with wings because these images are comprehensible to inferior human perception. Human perception is able to approach the image at a spiritual and not a literal level, in order to unlock the meaning behind its enigmatic demonstration of angelic nature. In this passage, John of Damascus gave a definition of relation of image and prototype wherein images have no ability to describe their model visually, only to provide intellectual means for the viewer to apprehend spiritually an otherwise unknowable creature.

Defining the precise quality of the relation between images and their prototypes, and consequently what this quality meant for understanding images, was an especially knotty problem in defending the representations of angels. John of Damascus's definition of relation determined, to a certain extent, the course of the theological discussion. For iconoclasts, of course, any relation of prototype to image was considered impossible because iconoclasts defined a true image as consubstantial with the prototype. John of Damascus, in contrast, denied that the image was able to have any essential relation with its prototype.

An image is of like character with its prototype, but with a certain difference. It is not like the archetype in every way. The Son is the living, essential, and precisely similar image of the invisible God,

62. *De imag. or.*, III.24, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, 132; *On the Divine Images*, trans. Anderson, 79.

bearing the entire father within himself, equal to him in all things, except that he is begotten by him, the begetter.⁶³

The first kind of image for John of Damascus is the natural image.⁶⁴ The other images, and John of Damascus enumerated six more, are non-essential, artificial images.⁶⁵ The fourth kind includes the angels who do not relate to their images essentially, but rather symbolically and intangibly:

These [images] give us a faint apprehension of God and the angels where otherwise we would have none, because it is impossible for us to think immaterial things unless we can envision analogous shapes, as the great and holy Dionysius the Areopagite has said.⁶⁶

John of Damascus stated that the image and prototype are related in the case of the angels and God only in an indistinct and referential way, that affords human intellect some glimpse of incomprehensible matters. Images are therefore an important means by which knowledge of God, and of his manifestations and creations, is initiated and increased. According to John of Damascus, images are an incomplete but necessary reference and aid to better knowledge of the unknowable things of God:

Again, visible things are corporeal models which provide a vague understanding of intangible things. Holy scripture describes God and the angels as having descriptive form, and the same blessed Dionysius teaches us why. Anyone would say that our inability im-

63. *De imag. or.*, I.11, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*. III, 83–84; *On the Divine Images*, trans. Anderson, 19.

64. *De imag. or.*, III.15ff., *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*. III, 126ff.; *On the Divine Images*, trans. Anderson, 74ff.

65. On these types, see the remarks of M. Barasch, *Icon. Studies in the History of an Idea* (New York and London, 1992) 220–36. One should add that his discussion of angels, *ibid.*, 236–43, along with J. Pelikan, *Imago Dei. The Byzantine Apologia for Icons* (Princeton, 1990) 153–82, has much usefulness.

66. *De imag. or.*, III.21, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*. III, 128; *On the Divine Images*, trans. Anderson, 76.

mediately to direct our thoughts to contemplation of higher things makes it necessary that familiar everyday media be utilized to give suitable form to what is formless, and make visible what cannot be depicted, so that we are able to construct understandable analogies.⁶⁷

Like Pseudo-Dionysius, John of Damascus argued for material signs as a necessary step to intellectual contemplation of immaterial reality. Paradoxically, “descriptive form” which does not have an essential relation to angels or God is provided for humanity’s weak understanding so that analogies proper to human intellect can be made.

Nicephorus asserted a highly intellectualized association of image and angelic prototype that was stricter and more articulated than that offered by John of Damascus.⁶⁸ He defined the angelic nature as “simple and incomposite”;⁶⁹ furthermore, the angels are “unseeable by corporeal eyes,” and bodiless and invisible and without form.⁷⁰ The angels are invisible exactly because they are “beyond and unparticipating in their shapes and forms.”⁷¹ However, the angels’ special quality of unviewability compelled Nicephorus to reconcile the many instances of appearances in scripture and angelic nature.⁷² Nicephorus thus claimed that the angels did not reveal their real nature, but rather effected a symbolic transformation that was analogous to the particular need of the moment.⁷³ God himself has ordained and created the angels because he knows well humanity’s

67. *De imag. or.*, I.11, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*. III, 84–85; *On the Divine Images*, trans. Anderson, 20.

68. See C. von Schönborn, *L’icône du Christ. Fondements théologiques élaborées entre le Ier et le IIer Concile de Nicée (325–787)* (Fribourg, 1976) 206ff.

69. *Antirrheticus II aduersus Constantinum Copronymum*, ix, PG 100:349B. See M.-J. Mondzain-[Baudinet], *Nicéphore le Patriarche: Discours contre les iconoclastes* (Paris, 1990) and *Image, icône, économie. Les sources byzantines de l’imaginaire contemporain* (Paris, 1996) 281–92, for translations of this text.

70. *Ant. II adv. Const. Cop.*, xi, PG 100:353A; and see Giannopoulos, “Η περὶ ἀγγέλων διδασκαλία,” 314ff.

71. See *Apol. pro sac. imag.*, 70, PG 100:769C.

72. Giannopoulos, “Η περὶ ἀγγέλων διδασκαλία,” 329ff.

73. *Apol. pro sac. imag.*, 70, PG 100:781AB, “Yet the holy cherubim, being simple and immaterial, imageless and formless, and therefore bodiless, and circumscribed in a sense perceptible place.... For if someone should hear somewhere that at some time the holy angels are

weakness; ruling and guiding our affairs he knows fully our capacities for knowledge.⁷⁴ The forms of angels are disguised and vary according to circumstance and occasion. Likewise, the images are equally obscure, since they are unable to correspond visually and essentially.

For it must not be thought that in the forms of wild beasts or oxen or winged birds the nature of the other worldly powers is characterised. Nevertheless, it is by divine commands, because God wished it, that all these things are seen easily and readily, and the angels are depicted and painted.⁷⁵

The forms of angels are symbolic manifestations apprehended intellectually; and in a similar way the images of angels must be perceived symbolically, by intellectual and not only visual processes. Nicephorus described the representations of the angels as an approach to knowledge of God through a contemplation of their invisible formlessness. Furthermore, this approach, he stated, is imperative, in that “the forms of the formless ones and the figures of those without figures are to be laid before us justly.”⁷⁶ Images are non-descriptive but necessary aids to worship and comprehension of God’s formless ministers.

[B]ecause for us the comparison is impossible directly, with respect to an intellectual perception to be offered, … [the images of the angels] offer to us attainable forms of the formless and supernatural sights. For this is the work of divine goodness and of fatherly care

seen embodied, one should not understand anything but that they manifest themselves symbolically, having transformed themselves, in such forms according to the matter in hand in which they perform their charges on earth; therefore their nature is unknown to us.”

74. *Antir. II adv. Const. Cop.*, ix, PG 100:349C, “Many angelophanies have occurred in the services of God. The angels have not appeared according to their nature, but in the degree of sanctity and purity is it measured for him who is granted so great a vision, or for the matter in hand, necessity, and time required. In this way, the shapes and the forms of the shapeless and formless ones are formed and they make themselves manifest differently to those worthy of the vision with pure eyes of intellect.”

75. *Apol. pro sac. imag.*, 70, PG 100:781B.

76. *Apol. pro sac. imag.*, 70, PG 100:777B.

on our behalf, that the most blessed things are made manifest in the figured symbols of heavenly powers, and made comprehensible for us, matter worked by hand which leads us to an accessible imitation and contemplation of their proper nature.⁷⁷

The “figured symbols” are the means by which comprehension of the angelic powers are then conceded to weaker, mortal intellects by God. The symbols are entirely referential since they cannot capture any truth about the real nature or appearance of the angels. Following Pseudo-Dionysius and John of Damascus, Nicephorus concluded that the representations are an approachable and essential means to a spiritual contemplation of an invisible reality.

Nicephorus went on to state that no essential relationship exists between the prototype and the image, that “pictorial representation is an external factor and has nothing in common with the definition of essence.”⁷⁸ However, a direct relationship between image and prototype can be posited. The image and prototype possess resemblance

77. *Apol. pro sac. imag.*, 70, PG 100:777BC. See, too, John of Damascus in a similar vein: “We know that it is impossible to look upon God, or a spirit, or a demon, as they are by nature. We would be able to see them, however, if they appeared in forms alien to their nature. Therefore God in His providence has clothed in forms and shapes things which are bodiless and without form, in order to lead us to more particular knowledge, lest we should be totally ignorant of God and of bodiless creatures. Only God by nature is utterly without a body, but an angel, or a soul, or a demon, when compared to God (who alone cannot be compared to anything) does have a body, but when these are compared to material bodies, they are bodiless” (*De imag. or.*, III.26, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*. III, 130–31; *On the Divine Images*, trans. Anderson, 79).

78. *Antir. I adv. Const. Cop.*, 29–30, PG 100:277C–80C; trans. Alexander, *The Patriarch Nicephorus of Constantinople*, 200–201, “Therefore necessarily it belongs to, and is called, a relative [notion].... If somehow the pattern should disappear, the relation does not end together with it: the law of mutual cancellation does not pertain to all such [notions], for sometimes the relations remain and survive although deprived of their object ... for by the similarity and remembrance and form, it [the image] shows even the deceased as if he were present and it preserves the relation as time goes along. Now likeness is an intermediate relation and mediates between the extremes, I mean, the person represented and the representation. It unites and connects [them] through the form even though they differ in nature.... In addition likeness bestows also equivocalness, for the appellation is the same for both ... it does not have identity of essence, nor can we in all respects predicate what is predicated of the pattern as pattern also of the image derived from it.”

not through essential relation, materially or visually, but through equivocation. “Although the matter from which an image is made is soulless and senseless and motionless, the image is addressed by the same name as the prototype and so worthy of glory and grace.”⁷⁹ The images, therefore, have an unlikeness to the archetype but have, nonetheless, relational qualities and are not then irrelevant.⁸⁰ It follows from this reasoning that the name determines resemblance for images of angels, and any question of similarity in nature and appearance is beside the point.

It is seen that nothing there is enigma, nothing obscure, nothing presented obliquely or wrapped in allegory, that these things which are soulless, unfeeling, entirely motionless, made out of soulless and illogical matter, merely carved and brilliant in appearance, and in the purest of material, are wisely different from those most holy cherubim, who are living, energised, eternally moving powers, named as the God of all deemed proper. For the images of the cherubim are neither similitudes nor are they direct impressions but God used the name in equivocity by his own command when he called them cherubim by voice purely and directly.⁸¹

As Nicephorus stated, the images of the cherubim are not of the same nature nor do they have any real resemblance, but the images are clearly they, because they are called so by God himself, as Exodus testifies. The images partake of the name of cherubim and also of the glory which is the share of the archetype.⁸² Therefore, “these things made of gold are images of images, quite obscure, quite dissimilar, and very much distinct from the paradigmatic cause.” The images do

79. *Antir. II adv. Const. Cop.*, 8, PG 100:348C.

80. Giannopoulos, “Η περὶ ἀγγέλων διδασκαλία,” 334ff.

81. *Apol. pro sac. imag.*, 70, PG 100:776CD. And also: “But may it be conceded that the cherubim on the Ark were given their name by God, whence the possession of glory presaged by them? Indeed this was the first command of God, which God announced and made venerable. For nothing is in vain or empty that proceeded from him” (*Apol. pro sac. imag.*, 70, PG 100:777C).

82. *Apol. pro sac. imag.*, 71, PG 100:780AB.

not participate substantially with their prototypes, yet God himself formed the relation.⁸³

The ninth-century mosaics of the angelic powers in the bema arch of the destroyed church of the Dormition at Nicaea (Iznik) demonstrate the relationship of image and inscription discussed in iconophile theory. The mosaics were restored—in all probability—to their original state, a direct consequence of the restoration of images in 843, and this reinstatement attests to active iconophile involvement on both practical and theoretical levels in the mosaic program.⁸⁴ The four angelic powers, identical in appearance, were clearly differentiated by the (imperfect) inscriptions which refer to distinct angelic ranks based on Colossians 1:16: on the south side, the Principality (*APXE*) and Power (*ΔΤΝΑΜΙΣ*) (fig. 9), and on the north side, the Domination (*KΤΠΙΩΤΙΤΕΣ*) and Virtue (*ΕΞΟΤΣΙΕ*) (fig. 10). As this chapter contends, iconophile theory holds that images of angels cannot claim likeness, only a relation made through equivocation; in fact, the lack of likeness, the symbolic nature of the depiction, is the characteristic that exhorts the viewer to spiritual engagement. The mosaics at Nicaea were demonstrations of this characteristic, developed before Iconoclasm and fully articulated by iconophiles. The redundant and generalized nature of the depictions of these beings might lead the viewer to believe that only one category of angel is represented; yet, the inscriptions deny this interpretation by stating instead that the beings are distinct in office, aspect and character. In other words, with beings who possess no likeness, the inscription does not determine likeness. On the contrary, in representations of different angelic beings with identical forms, the possibility of individual resemblance is constantly thwarted.

83. *Apol. pro sac. imag.*, 70, PG 100:773C.

84. The inscription in the bema stated that Naukratius restored the figural portions of the mosaics. Naukratius has been identified as a disciple of Theodore of Stoudios who died in 848. See E. Wiegand, “Zur Monogrammminsschrift der Theotokos-(Koimesis)Kirche von Nicaea,” *B* 6(1931):411–20, E. E. Lipsić, “Naukratij i Nikeiskie Mozaikij,” *Zbornik Radova Vizantoloskog Instituta* 8/2(1964):241–46, and R. Cormack, “Painting After Iconoclasm,” in *Iconoclasm. Papers Given at the Ninth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, University of Birmingham, March 1975*, ed. A. Bryer and J. Herrin (Birmingham, 1977) 147.

The meaning of the restoration of the figural portions of this mosaic has been undervalued as an important statement on the significance of the visual in ninth-century Byzantium. Iconophile theory has partly contributed to this misunderstanding; it laid stress on the ability of inscription not only to establish the identity of images but also to maintain an essential distinction between prototype and image. This stress on the policing nature of words has led to a miscomprehension of the value and role of the visual; moreover, it has led to a neglect of the visual quality of the word in actual Byzantine images.

Not only did the mosaics of the angelic powers at Nicaea preserve the marks of restoration, the sutures revealing earlier editing, they also showed material words: on the one hand, the earlier inscriptions (psalms and nominations) and, on the other, a new cluster of letters between the powers on the south side (fig. 9). The latter reveal that a certain Naucratius (d. 848), probably a follower of Theodore of Stoudios, has returned a proper balance of figuration and inscription to the mosaics. This balance is the other important issue the mosaics raise: that the symbiosis of figuration and inscription worked as a negation, mutually denying these visual components any resemblance to the prototype. Unlike the literal—one might even say natural—quality of the images of the Virgin and Child in the apse (fig. 16), the powers were absolutely conventional signs since all aspects of description on the bema arch denied resemblance to their models; instead, they were prospective, transparent to a transcendental reality.

The Byzantine images of angels, such as those at Nicaea, relate to the angels themselves as negations and contradictions: the angels were represented in the mosaics only in a symbolic, allusive sense, and they did not correspond essentially or visually with that mosaic. The nominating inscriptions on these mosaics stated that the image “is” in a relative way an angelic being. At the same time, the inscriptions stated that the image “is not,” indeed cannot be, a likeness of this being. The inscriptions then pronounced a provisional state of correspondence, a series of possible relations between material images and the angels’ immaterial formlessness.

This quality of relation might be construed as an uneven association of text and image since the representation has no independent

ability to state a visual resemblance.⁸⁵ Interpreting the iconophile definition of equivocation as logocentric would be mistaken, however, as the iconophile texts adduced at the beginning of this section demonstrate the fundamental importance of vision, of viewing images, for proper teaching and contemplation of God by Christians. Indeed, images of Christ depend primarily on the power of vision, that is, the ability of Christians to see God in his human form; viewing Christ's form literally is essential for understanding its meaning, as Theodore of Stoudios stated.

In contrast, both the epigrams and iconophile theory concerning angels showed that the compelling power of vision leads the viewer of images of angels into higher meditation because of the very lack of any possibility of resemblance in these images. In these cases, the inscriptions were also “images” since iconophiles did not hold to the exclusive notion of images that iconoclasts defended. Inscriptions and representations were brought equally to the fore in this mosaic of the angelic powers since the flat gold ground simulated no depth or, at least, equal depth, on the surface. No division was constructed for real or represented space, for word and image, that might prioritize one or the other.⁸⁶ Both nominating inscription and figures of powers are inclusive, complementary “images.”

85. Gilbert Dagron has claimed that the image becomes redundant in iconophile image theory since the word, the name applied to the image, determines the likeness of the image. See G. Dagron, “Mots, images, icônes,” *Nouvelle revue de psychanalyse* 44(1991):160ff. However, Dagron equated this iconophile notion of equivocalness with the earlier handbooks describing “εἰκονισμός.” “Εἰκονισμός” involved a process of verbal delineation of visual appearance which relied upon direct equivalences of word and image; in this way, Dagron says one could convert a proper name into a visualizable formula. Yet this parallel only explains one aspect of the iconophile theologians’ position since these theologians also viewed images with more complexity and allegorical insight and did not admit a simple equivalency of name and image in every case. The angels, of course, belie any simple equivalence of name and image by which Dagron might characterize the iconophile position and the methods of “εἰκονισμός”: verbal delineation of angels, as well as the visual description, is allusive and imprecise.

In short, the image resembles only itself through the inscribed name on the image, “L'image de culte est un *nomen sacrum*. Elle possède une sacralité intrinsèque.” See *ibid.*, 162. Yet this formulation leaves the image as a merely reflexive sign, wholly determined by the inscription’s verbal affirmation of likeness.

86. See L. Marin, “The Order of Words and the Order of Things in Painting,” *Visible Language* 23(1989):197ff.



Figure 17. René Magritte, *The Treachery of Images* (*Ceci n'est pas une pipe*), c. 1928–29. Photo: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, purchased with funds provided by the Mr. and Mrs. William Preston Harrison Collection.

Looking at similar issues in different periods is sometimes helpful for casting new light on problems, and I propose here to use certain elements of Michel Foucault's analysis of René Magritte's *The Treachery of Images* from 1929 (fig. 17).⁸⁷ Foucault scrutinized a relationship of word and image that has striking parallels with Byzantine theory and practice of representing angels. In Magritte's painting, the likeness of a pipe is convincing in its realistic depiction of a pipe set against a stark background, but the inscription, "Ceci n'est pas une pipe," obstructs the mimetic quality that the depiction can claim. Foucault maintained that the relation of text and image becomes a

87. M. Foucault, *This Is Not a Pipe*, trans. J. Harkness (Berkeley, 1982). M.-J. Baudinet, "L'incarnation, l'image, la voix," *Esprit* (Feb. 1982):194–95, also discerned an affinity between Magritte's painting and the iconophile theory of equivocation.

“subtle and instable dependency” since the image is detached from the possibility of mimesis by the inscription.⁸⁸

On the inscription and representation in Magritte’s painting, Foucault wrote that they “annul the intrinsic resemblance they seem to bear within themselves, and gradually sketch an open network of similitudes.”⁸⁹ The inscribed image of the angelic powers also worked on the level of symbiosis of text and representation, whose mutual denial of real resemblance constituted a meaningful, material referent, at once opposed and complementary to the prototype. Moreover, each element of the inscription and the representation “denies along with resemblance the assertion of reality resemblance conveys,” to use Foucault’s terms,⁹⁰ and so the image provided a material sign which the viewer cannot interpret literally. The representation and inscription do not affirm one another.

Negation in the case of these mosaics was not only a function of language, here inscribed words; figuration was also negative. Distinct from these powers’ representations, resemblance is unavoidable in Magritte’s banal pipe. As Carlo Ginzburg has recently asserted, “In order to say, ‘Ceci n’est pas une pipe,’ we need words. Images are what they are.”⁹¹ Not so for images of angels: both figures and inscriptions are equal, non-resembling referents. All iconophile theory rested on the belief that angels as winged men were simply symbols that relied on their prospective nature to excite the viewer’s desire to explore the enigmatic transparency of the images.⁹²

88. Foucault, *This Is Not a Pipe*, 29: “No longer can anything pass between them save the decree of divorce, the statement at once contesting the name of the drawing and the reference of the text. Nowhere is there a pipe.”

89. Foucault, *This Is Not a Pipe*, 47. On this passage, see G. Shapiro, “Pipe Dreams: Eternal Recurrence and Simulacrum in Foucault’s Ekphrasis of Magritte,” *Word & Image* 13(1997):74, and D. Chateau, “De la ressemblance: un dialogue Foucault-Magritte,” in *L’image Deleuze, Foucault, Lyotard*, ed. T. Lenain (Paris, 1998), 95–108.

90. Foucault, *This Is Not a Pipe*, 47.

91. C. Ginzburg, “Idols and Likenesses: Origen, *Homilies on Exodus VIII.3*, and Its Reception,” in *Sight and Insight. Essays in Honour of E. H. Gombrich at 85*, ed. J. Onians (London, 1994) 67.

92. See, for instance, L. Marin, *To Destroy Painting*, trans. M. Hjort (Chicago and London, 1995) 7: “I am thinking of the desire to know the enigma that opens up the space of desire only to withhold all gratification; the desire to decipher the secret, to identify the let-

This definition of a simultaneous act of denying resemblance and engaging symbols is a primary mode of comprehension according to Pseudo-Dionysius, as discussed at the beginning of this chapter.⁹³ For Pseudo-Dionysius, proper symbols are not distracting in their resemblances or material quality, but allow the intelligence to interpret them as it is able. And, moreover, this play of the intelligence on a material image is described in practice outside abstract theological discourse in the epigrams of Agathias and Nilus Scholasticus. In these texts, the dissimilarity of image and model provided the image with a tension by which a “higher contemplation” is encouraged in the viewer. Furthermore, this striving to create a breach between image and model while still maintaining a meaningful relationship between the two has been shown to be of fundamental importance to iconophile theology. Proper worship—in this symbolic theology—is predicated upon the viewer not being seduced into believing that there is a real resemblance between image and model; equivocation provides in this sense a prudent, intellectual relation.

And yet the viewer has to be engaged by the image and believe it has meaning; as the epigrams state, colors and form of the incorporeal being compel the viewer through his or her eyes to direct the “mind to a higher contemplation.” The representation and inscription, rather than affirming one another,⁹⁴ perform just the opposite operation. A viewer of an image of an angel must engage the material object by means of its color and form, and through this engagement realize, in every sense, that “this is not an angel.”

ters (or letter) that constitute(s) the formula providing access to the painting; the desire finally to make explicit the discourse whose origin this formula conceals, the longing to transform the pleasure of painting or its *jouissance* into a pleasure or *jouissance* of language.”

93. And the text in praise of Michael and Gabriel by Michael of Stoudios attests to the currency of the thought of Pseudo-Dionysius in the second half of the ninth century. Furthermore, he adduces Pseudo-Dionysius in support of his pro-image orthodoxy. See “*Éloge des archevêques Michel et Gabriel par Michel le Moine (BHG 1294a)*,” ed. T. Matantseva, *JöB* 46(1996):136 (V.4), 145 (XII.1), and 119–20.

94. Dagron, “Mots, images, icônes,” 161.

Four

THE VENERATION OF ANGELS AND THEIR IMAGES

THEOLOGICAL VIEWS

Proper Christian worship was a central issue in the centuries preceding Iconoclasm, and iconophiles and iconoclasts continued this debate during the eighth and ninth centuries. Images dominated discussion during Iconoclasm but the debate naturally implicated long-standing questions of Christian ethics and appropriate devotion. As this chapter will demonstrate, angels figured large in this discussion of images, their worship and function. Iconophiles defended the symbolic representations of angels as a special case, with important historical precedents, both written, as in Hebrew scripture, and unwritten, as ancient Christian practice showed. In keeping with one strand of Christian theology, iconoclasts defended “images” that Christians made by modeling themselves after paragons from the past. The *topos* of the “angelic life” in monastic practice, as the following section will show, had special meaning in this regard, since an angelic “image” in this context meant a suitably pious life. Iconoclasts abjured worship offered to angels or to their material images, as undesired by these beings and inappropriate for a devout Christian. Miracle stories and theology intersect very intimately,

then, in this chapter; both reveal self-conscious concern with the dangers of angelolatry and idolatry that had always been inherent in the cult of angels.

Because iconophile argumentation is extensive, it is possible to follow iconophile reaction to iconoclastic accusations of idolatry as these accusations implicated angels and their images. Iconophiles' understanding of the relation between image and model was a safeguard, in their view, against any risk of idolatry; and iconophiles established this notion on the firm ground of Christian history and custom.

Particular attention to iconophile sources that aim to combat iconoclastic arguments about the proper place of images in devotion, particularly images of angels, illuminates the history of the veneration of angels in Byzantium. The concept of the equivocal relation of image and model was central to iconoclastic objections to iconophile worship and ethics. Because angels, and particularly the cherubim, figured so prominently in iconophile defense, they emerged in a debate over worship and ethics as cornerstones to iconophile image theory. For this reason, discussion of the notional difficulties of this equivocal relation of spiritual angelic beings to their material representations was central to an iconophile defense of image worship. Moreover, further examination of iconophile texts on worship reveals attitudes of iconoclasts and their predecessors concerning images and angels themselves; these attitudes must be reconstructed from fragments and inference but a clear picture of iconoclastic ideas does indeed emerge from these limited sources.

Image worship invited misinterpretation, and iconoclastic charges forced iconophiles to react to accusations of idolatry. In their contentions over what constituted seemly and worthwhile worship, iconophiles used traditional defenses that derived largely from the anti-Jewish texts of the seventh century.¹ These texts comprise a body of polemical material from the sixth and seventh centuries aimed at combating perceived threats to Christian faith; they are often in the

1. See K.A. Corrigan, *Visual Polemics in the Ninth-Century Byzantine Psalters* (Cambridge, 1992) 33ff.

form of a dialogue, probably invented in most cases, but corresponding to points of faith which Christian theologians considered misconstrued or misunderstood by outsiders. A principal charge made in this genre was that Christians worship material objects; the authors denied that Christians worship matter, and they answered with the symbolic defense, that honor passed through the object to God.²

Iconoclasts had consistently advanced charges of idolatry against iconophiles and cited Epiphanius of Salamis (ca. 315–403) as their champion in order to malign iconophiles' base and pointless worship of matter. In the course of his counterattack, the *Adversus Epiphanidem*, one of the *Antirrhetics* written between 818 and 820, Nicephorus, the patriarch of Constantinople at the beginning of Iconoclasm in 815, quoted a number of passages written by Epiphanius that showed the thrust of the iconoclastic argument. The "thoughtless one"—called Epiphanides, a fourth-century Docetist, by Nicephorus, but in reality Epiphanius—posed this question: "How do you worship the angels, who are spirits and living without end, described in dead matter, since the prophet says, '[God] who maketh his angels spirits; his ministers a flaming fire' (Ps. 104:4)?"³ Against this attack Nicephorus first answered with the standard retort: "From these things who would not realise or discover that these are not the words of the holy Epiphanius, unless he were an exceeding disputatious and contentious person?"⁴

2. See Pseudo-Athanasius, *Quaestiones ad Antiochum Ducem*, XXXIX, PG 28:621B-D; Leontius of Neapolis, in *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos. III Contra imaginum calumniatores orationes tres*, PTS vol. 17, ed. P.B. Kotter (Berlin, 1975) 156–58, V. Deroche, "L'Apologie contre les Juifs de Léontios de Néapolis," *TM* 12(1994):79ff.; the *Trophies of Damascus*, *Les Trophées de Damas*, PO vol. 15/2, ed. G. Bardy (Paris, 1920; rp. Louvain, 1973) 78.nff.; the Dialogue between the Jews, Papiscus and Philo, and a Monk, *Dialogue between a Christian and a Jew entitled ANTIBΟΛΗ ΠΑΠΙΣΚΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΦΙΛΩΝΟΥ ΙΟΤΔΑΙΩΝ ΗΡΟΣ ΜΟΝΑΧΟΝ ΤΙΝΑ*, ed. A.C. McGiffert (Marburg, 1889) 51–52; Hieronymus of Jerusalem, *De effectu baptisimi et notis Christiani*, PG 40:865AB; Anastasius Sinaïtes, *Disputatio adversus Judaeos*, II, PG 89:1233C–6A; and, finally, the Armenian John Mayragometsi, in S. Der Nersessian, "Une apologie des images du septième siècle," *B* 17(1944/5):60. The Διδασκαλία Ἰακωβοῦ stated that the wood of the cross was not venerated but that it was a sign, a type for Christ and that honor passes to him through the object; see *La Didascalie de Jacob*, PO vol. 8/5, ed. F. Nau (Paris, 1912; rp. Turnhout, 1971) 61.12–62.3.

3. In *Adversus Epiphanidem*, IX.35, Pitra IV:318.2–7; Holl 358, #7.

4. *Adv. Epi.*, IX.35, Pitra IV:318.8–10.

Iconophiles saw God's command for the manufacture of the Ark of the Covenant as a circumvention of any charge of idolatry. Moving from charges of falsification, Nicephorus cited the authority of Exodus 25:22 and the necessary obedience to its strictures:

For Epiphanius did not ignore the things commanded by God to Moses concerning the cherubim, nor did he thrust away and reject the so-called holy of holies; although fashioned out of soulless matter, it was yet honorable. But indeed he believed and always adhered to these things with diligence and honor, especially what derived from the Jewish people, and he esteemed them as commands of God, passing them on as Christian teachings; unless indeed one supposes that the things written about his life were done mendaciously. This noble man appears to reveal the prophet in his words concerning the angels. Yet he speaks against God, and he speaks against Moses, who makes law in vain, since [Epiphanius] does not consider this legislating to constitute law, and [Moses] complies with it, and so [Moses] in vain toils against the making of the cherubim and of other things, such as God has commanded. Certainly [Epiphanius] would have been worthy if he had adhered at least to the letter and the laws of old. But this one is more disobedient than the Jews and more ignorant, not desiring to know that he who made his angels spirits and his ministers a burning fire, commanded by law that the cherubim be made from the purest gold. What then? Has he discarded it and esteemed it little? Yet he does introduce Paul who called these things the holy of holies and the cherubim of glory, truly extolling these things.⁵

For Nicephorus, the fact that Epiphanius could cite the injunction against the making of "graven images" (Ex. 20:4), while ignoring God's more specific charge to make images of angels, showed willful disregard for distinctions God himself had made. The citation of the Second Commandment was, therefore, a false position which was partially blind and wholly irreverent. Dismissing the express desire of God was heretical, and Nicephorus claimed furthermore that it led

5. *Adv. Epi.*, IX.35, Pitra IV:318.13–319.12.

to an alignment with the pagans or the heretical Manichaeans.⁶ Iconoclasts questioned the validity of this injunction to construct the Ark for the New Covenant, as well as its applicability for the figurative arts. Iconoclasts—here represented by Epiphanius—regarded art literally and saw that the material outline of an image of the cherubim could in no way conform to, or in any meaningful way convey, the real nature of the angelic host. Conversely, iconophiles read the injunction at Exodus 25:22 literally but were able to view the worked image as a symbol whose value was activated in an intellectual, spiritual approach to worship.

Iconophiles interpreted the Second Commandment as an injunction against untoward adoration, but at the same time they interpreted it as a law conditional on the initiation of the New Covenant.⁷ In this sense, they again adapted arguments put forward in the anti-Jewish literature of the seventh century. In these texts, the Second Commandment had only been dictated by God because the Jews themselves had been disposed to idolatry, and this Commandment was subsequently made obsolete by the incarnation of Christ.⁸ Iconophiles saw the Second Commandment as a directive from God with a specific historical context. As Ignatius the Deacon (ca. 770/80–d. after 845) wrote in his biography of the patriarch Nicephorus, the patriarch believed that the Second Commandment was addressed to the particular inclinations of the pagan Egyptians by whom the Israelites had been influenced while in captivity.⁹

6. *Antirrheticus II, Adversus Constantinum Copronymum*, 8, PG 100:348C.

7. On this question, see H. L. Kessler, “Pictures Fertile with Truth: How Christians Managed to Make Images of God without Violating the Second Commandment,” *The Journal of the Walters Art Gallery* 49/50(1991/2):53–65.

8. See the *Dialogue between a Christian and a Jew*, 73–77; *Disputation of Sergius the Styliste against a Jew*, ed. A. P. Hayman, 2 vols. (Louvain, 1973) II:48, 51–52, 54; and Anastasius Sinaïtes, *Dis. adv. Jud.*, II, PG 89:1236A.

9. *Vita Nicephori*, VII, PG 100:93A–C: “Since therefore that law giver led the people entrusted to him by God out of Egypt, wishing to purify from their souls and erase the defilements acquired there, in order that human images not conceive of the divine in humanlike images or in other forms of living things. He exhorted them in this way giving this law: Do not according to the custom of the Egyptians, o humanity, nor learning from them absurdly let an image of god be made by us, nor of these things flying through the air, or moving on earth, or swimming the seas. For these things are not God even if the Egyptians say they are, and he must not be depicted by an image, he who cannot be contemplated. For

Nicephorus then adduced the examples of the temple of Solomon and the Ark that God commanded, also mentioned in the Epistle to Hebrews (9:2ff.). God's commandment, therefore, did not apply to Christian images, which were sanctified by God's own injunction for their manufacture, but only applied to false idols.

The iconoclastic charge that iconophiles worshipped lifeless matter made it essential for iconophiles to render a counter-argument on a meaningful, though clearly demarcated, relation between image and prototype. Again, Exodus and its description of the cherubim provided the defense. As Nicephorus reasoned, Christians did not worship even the holy representations made out of the purest and brightest material, fabricated by human hands at the command of God himself. And yet the angels, intellectual and invisible beings, were "fashioned out of gold and sitting above the Ark, and these are neither intellects nor intellectual nor do they possess visible appearance...." These material images on the Ark were altogether

destitute of life and power and energy, as their bodies are put in matter, even if the plate happens to be the purest and most splendid material. And having been made images and having bodies out of matter, they are alterations and schematisations, and they are not free from corruption and change.¹⁰

Material objects neither distract nor demean Christian worship since the images of angels were simply matter and fundamentally distinct. Nicephorus maintained that good Christians have the ability to discriminate between idols and true images through pious devotion and faith.¹¹ True images were representations of actual beings, ordained

God is unviewable and without form and invisible and is not at all among things seen by human eyes. But he is only perceptible to the mind, if someone somewhere should be capable of this.... Therefore, the law giver forbade that images of God alone be made."

10. Both quotations from *Apologeticus pro sacris imaginibus*, 70, PG 100:769D–72A.

11. *Antirr. I, Adv. Const. Copr.*, 29, PG 100:277B, "An idol is a fictive thing and the representation of a non-existent being, such things as the Hellenes by want of good sense and godlessness make representations of, such as the tritons and the centaurs and other phantasms which do not exist. And in this respect icons and idols are to be distinguished from one another; those not accepting the distinction of these would rightly be called idolaters. And as

by God, and securely related by the epigraphy contained on the images. The inscription on the images stabilized the relationship between image and prototype, and safeguarded against any misapprehension concerning the similarities between the two that might lead to inappropriate worship of the image itself. Therefore, in Nicephorus's view, good Christians had the ability to distinguish between worship directed at matter and veneration that ascends to the prototype through the image.

Iconophiles evoked a long-standing Christian tradition of images in worship as further proof of mature and correct discrimination by Christians. Moreover, Nicephorus claimed that this Christian legacy of images in worship was untainted by falsification of texts or misrepresentation of the past. The materialist worship that iconophiles defended was not an invention, as iconoclasts claimed, but an unbroken tradition of seemly devotion that began in the apostolic era.

Iconophiles fell back on the unwritten tradition that the worship of icons had been practiced and condoned from the church's inception. Against Epiphanius, Nicephorus stated that it was not merely a question of one or two or three or four people who disagreed with Epiphanius's position, but the entire catholic church.¹² Finally, he pointed out that images of angels were found in many churches, and always had been. "Everywhere on earth in the holy churches the stories are full of the powers of the bodiless ones in holy representations, and of the catholic church, through whose strength the tradition was anciently settled."¹³ On the most literal level of defense, Nicephorus offered the indisputable fact of practice: images of the angels exist and have done for the entire history of the Church, "For if someone were not to represent the angels, by reason of their incorporeality, it would have been stated many times previously."¹⁴ Iconoclasts could muster theologians to substantiate their position against

for icons, there are icons of good and trifling sorts, and it is important to distinguish. One should honor the good, reject the worthless, and equally shun idolatry."

12. *Adv. Epi.*, IX.35, Pitra IV:318.8–23.

13. *Antir. II, Adv. Const. Copr.*, 7, PG 100:348A.

14. *Adv. Epi.*, VI.17, Pitra IV:307.1–4.

angels' images, notably Epiphanius, but iconophiles considered their own record unblemished by heresy and falsification: both written and unwritten tradition corroborated their interpretation of images as indispensable to proper worship and understanding of God.

Iconophile and iconoclastic conceptions of proper worship were, therefore, fundamentally distinct: one side was able to posit a relation between image and prototype which was ineluctably binding but not essential, while the other saw any image not of the same substance as fraudulent and unnecessary. The divergence in approach was nowhere clearer than in a dialogue between Stephen the Younger (ca. 713–764?) and the emperor Constantine V (r. 740–775), in the *Vita* of Stephen the Younger written by Stephen the Deacon, perhaps in 806. Although clearly a set piece, as it was preserved in an iconophile saint's vita, this dialogue also gives an indication of the quality and depth of iconoclastic argumentation. The antagonist, Constantine V, offered real intellectual challenges to Stephen; he was not simply a "straw man." In the course of their encounter, Constantine V questioned Stephen about the significance and value of images of unknowable beings:

How is it possible to represent sensually the things announced by humanity to be beyond experience and difficult to see, and not lacking in intellectual quality, and to worship them through matter, when nothing is to be gained by these things in understanding of the being, except the infinity, as Gregory the Theologian said.¹⁵

This question was an example of an iconoclastic equation of prototype and image,¹⁶ and indeed Constantine V had pointed to the really problematic aspect of the iconophile argument, especially as it applied to angels: if material images of immaterial and invisible angels could only indicate their indescribable nature, then what practical use were these images in worship? Searching for the answer to

15. *La vie d'Étienne le Jeune*, Birmingham Byzantine and Ottoman Monographs, vol. 3, ed. M.-F. Auzépy (Aldershot, 1997) 156 (ch.55).

16. See A. Kazhdan and H. Maguire, "Byzantine Hagiographical Texts as Sources on Art," *DOP* 45(1991):9.

Constantine V's intellectually challenging question in the reply of Stephen the Younger is not entirely satisfying:

Indeed who would say, being in control of their own mind, that worshipping the things in the church, whether they be stone or gold or silver, is a worshipping of material things? Wherefore they are altered by name to holy things. You cannot distinguish between holy and profane, nor are you afraid to state in demented folly that the icon of Christ is an idol, as if it were an image of Apollo, or that an image of the Virgin is the same thing as an image of Artemis, and to trample upon these things and to burn them.

This reply was an interesting, if not entirely persuasive, evasion. Stephen the Younger fastened onto one phrase in Constantine V's question, on the worship of divine things through matter, and made the common claim that proper worship exploited material images to pious ends. And he then proceeded to accuse the emperor of confusing pagan and Christian images.¹⁷ This response was not entirely typical of the quality of iconophile debating skills, and yet it highlighted the difficulties involved in answering all of the implications of iconoclastic attacks. Iconophiles commonly accused iconoclasts of not being able to discern which images were worthy of worship, and in this way they sidestepped some of the conceptual difficulties involved in comprehending Christian images of imperceptible beings.

The argument of equivocation posited an intimate relation between image and prototype that was difficult to sustain fully, and the near identity implied in the proposed relation provoked profound puzzlement among iconoclasts. In the vita of Stephen the Younger, after

17. This reply was a standard refutation of the iconoclastic comparison of idols and images. See, for instance, the ninth-century *Vita* of the Patriarch Tarasius (d. 806) by Ignatius the Deacon: "For, if you compare Zeus to our Saviour in that they are both reverently represented and you affirm that without making any distinction, consider whether you attach to Christ's holy form the insult you bestow upon the false-named Zeus." See *The Life of the Patriarch Tarasius by Ignatius the Deacon (BHG 1698)*, Birmingham Byzantine and Ottoman Monographs, vol. 4, ed. S. Efthymiadis (Aldershot, 1998) 144.9–12, 197. And see Nicephorus, *Antirr. I. Adv. Const. Copr.*, 28, PG 100:277B, who accused idols of representing what does not exist.

Stephen's claim that trampling upon the image of Christ visits violence upon Christ himself, the emperor exclaimed, "Are you then blinded in your mind, and forget yourself, to say that in treading upon the images of Christ, we are treading upon Christ himself? It would not be so!"¹⁸ Stephen answered him by taking out a coin with a representation of the emperor and his name inscribed, and asked if disrespect directed at the coin was not also directed at the emperor himself.

If Stephen's modest but dramatic act demonstrated that images were related to their prototypes, the iconophile theory of equivocation and relation answered the iconoclastic accusation of full identity of prototype and model with a great deal more philosophical clout. In the *Adversus Epiphaniudem*, after he has cited Epiphanius's charge that the angels' images were misleading and essentially irrelevant, Nicephorus returned with the charge that iconoclasts did not have the necessary capability for discrimination that would enable them to distinguish true and false images.¹⁹ He fell back on an argument similar to Stephen the Younger's, that iconoclasts were without the grace that proper faith provided and so they understood Christian images as pagans would. And for both Stephen and Nicephorus, the name applied altered the image through the forging of an intellectual link independent of the material aspects of the image.

The argument of relation of model and image through equivocation sanctioned by usage answered Constantine V's objection to images of angels as pointless and unenlightening material objects. Essential or visual similarity was not necessary for an evaluation of the worth of images in worship. Likeness was established mainly through veneration offered the prototype by means of the image. In common with other Christian images, the images of the angels did not, therefore, rely on witness and skill of the artist but on the value that society put on such images.²⁰ Despite the dissimilarity and ob-

18. *La vie d'Étienne le Jeune*, 156 (ch.55).

19. *Adv. Epi.*, VI.17, Pitra IV:306.24–35, "And he then calls the holy icons pseudonymous, attempting by this to destroy the relation (*λόγον*)."
This passage is part of Nicephorus's answer to Epiphanius; see Holl 357, #4.

20. According to iconophiles, relation does not depend on artistic skill in its ability to render likeness. For Theodore of Stoudios, no need existed for similarity between the two,

surity of the images of the angels in comparison to their models, Christians accepted these objects in worship as worthy of devotion and of spiritual contemplation because of convention.²¹ Tradition and Christian custom sanctioned the devotion offered to images of angels as signs of “infinity,” as Constantine phrased it. As iconophile descriptions of symbolic images asserted, the value of images of angels resided in their necessarily incomplete testimony to the incomprehensible nature of the angels.

Against this iconophile idea of Christian custom and practice, iconoclasts cited precedents for their views on idolatry and the misleading worship advocated by iconophiles. Iconoclasts advanced both Epiphanius and the fourth-century theologian Macarius Magnes because of their positions on scrupulous behavior before angels and their images. Both had defended restraint in honor given to angels; and because of the attendant difficulties in witnessing angels, Christians must abstain from the adoration of images since these could only be reductions and caricatures of the experience. For these reasons, iconoclasts recommended the two theologians and, in turn, iconophiles such as Nicephorus refuted and re-interpreted them. These precedents represent the traditional opposition to images preceding Iconoclasm, as well as the position of iconoclasts themselves, since the oppositional texts are only preserved in iconophile rebuttals.

neither regarding substance, size, dimension, nor genuine resemblance. Indeed, resemblance, in any precise visual sense, is entirely unnecessary. Only the equivocation of name need be applied for relation. See *Antirrheticus adversus iconomachos*, II.iii.5, PG 99:421CD.

Photius argued in the 860s that the recognition of relation was a matter of convention deriving from devotion. He stated that images ought not to be maligned because of dissimilarity in nature or in truth. For resemblance rests not only on the depiction’s outline of form and colors of shapes, but also on such things as arrangements and practice and expression of understanding and placement in holy areas, inscription and choice of symbols. See *Ad Amphiliocium*, CCV, PG 101:952AB; *Epistulae et Amphiliocia*, ed. B. Laourdas and L. G. Westerink, 6 vols. in 7 pts. (Leipzig, 1983–1988) I:110. He also considered the definition of similarity in the case of the cross; he concluded that the cross to which worship is offered and from which copies are made is most similar to its prototype. See *ibid.*, PG 101:949BC; Laourdas/Westerink, *Epistulae et Amphiliocia*, I:110. For Photius, and iconophiles generally, a definition of likeness rested on consensus and not on a visual or essential similarity between image and prototype.

21. On this text, see G. Dagron, “Holy Images and Likeness,” *DOP* 45(1991):24–25.

Judging from the iconophile reaction, iconoclasts had objected that the angels, for one, did not desire worship and raised the ethics of worship of angels—and consequently their images—as important issues. They attempted in this way to undermine the iconophiles' defense of a cultural consensus of worship built around the equivocal images of the angels. Again in the *Adversus Epiphanidem*, Nicephorus quoted Epiphanius's objection, "I say that [the angels] do not desire to be worshipped,"²² and exclaimed in response:

Therefore, do they desire to be insulted likewise? And for this reason does the impious one pour down so much scorn on them, at once ordaining these must not be worshipped, on account of his wicked and unthinking view of the glory reserved for them?²³

According to Nicephorus, Epiphanius had associated image and prototype with too little distinction. Indeed, Epiphanius's text revealed iconoclastic prejudices. As iconoclasts believed true images and models to be consubstantial, they had evidently produced Epiphanius's claim that angels did not desire worship as a corollary to their belief that images of angels were likewise not to be worshipped.²⁴ At this point, the intersection of theological discourse with models of worship found in saints' lives becomes clear: iconoclasts had confused angelolatry with idolatry; the two were inseparable in their view because of the belief in the necessary consubstantiality of the model and prototype. This confounding of angel and image into one ethical issue is an interesting strategy by iconoclasts: if angels had always been dangerously venerated, so were their images; if angels do not desire worship, neither do they want images. The answer to this ethical issue—as found in miracle stories of angels—is explored in the following section.

22. *Adv. Epi.*, IX.36, Pitra IV:319.15–16.

23. *Adv. Epi.*, IX.36, Pitra IV:319.17–21.

24. This claim is likely connected with the iconoclast belief in the necessary consubstantiality of image and prototype. Iconoclasts argued that the only true image was of the same matter as its model; therefore, the eucharist was a real image and any image that had only relation to its model was false. On this issue, see K. Parry, *Depicting the Word. Byzantine Iconophile Thought of the Eighth and Ninth Centuries* (Leiden, 1996) 178–90.

In Nicephorus's view, the angels did not seek veneration for themselves, nor did their images receive it. Epiphanius and his iconoclastic followers simply offered a wrong-headed definition of relation in seeing the angels and their images as equivalent. They sullied the proper non-essential relation of image and model through equivocation that iconophiles defended. Honor given to images did not stop there but proceeded to the prototypes themselves; consequently, "just as the icons are not worshipped, neither are the archetypes honoured."²⁵

A confusion of honor of prototype and image would suggest pagan worship, Nicephorus said. For pagans worship gods that did not exist, so that they were simply worshipping vain objects. In his *De Magnete*, Nicephorus had also defended Macarius Magne from the charge pressed by his pagan opponent that Christians worshipped angels. The pagan stated that Christian angels were comparable to gods and that honor bestowed on images of angels and gods were similarly appropriate. Nicephorus supported Macarius by insisting on the fundamental distinction between empty pagan idols and authentic Christian images:

Protecting our own worship from these ignoble mysteries that deserve darkness, he does not consider them worthy of Christians, nor does he desire to make images or honour them, such as [the Hellenes] make images and worship.²⁶

Thus, in theory, honor passed through the image, without material obstacle, directly to the prototype and in a way fundamentally different from pagan misapprehension of idols that were destitute of archetypes.

Despite Nicephorus's defense, an ethical definition of the "true" Christian image guided Epiphanius's and Macarius Magne's arguments, and this fourth-century advocacy for the ethical image must

25. *Adv. Epi.*, IX.41, Pitra IV:323.39–40; and also 324.4–7, "So that since the image of Christ is not honoured, it follows that he would wish that Christ himself not be honoured." In general, see *Adv. Epi.*, IX.36ff., Pitra IV:319.23ff.

26. *De Magnete*, I.14, Pitra I:311.19–23.

certainly have been a compelling precedent for iconoclasts. Nicephorus tried consistently to bring Macarius's arguments into line with iconophile concerns, but in fact Macarius had contended that a virtuous Christian did not make material images. In true worship, Macarius wrote, Christians modeled themselves after paragons of Christianity from the Church's teaching, thereby fashioning a true "image." Against the use of Macarius's writings by iconoclasts, Nicephorus responded with the normal accusation of falsification and stated that, in fact, Macarius Magnes was discussing the pagan position on images and not the Christian view.²⁷

Nicephorus attacked further the perverse use of the text by iconoclasts when discussing a passage by Macarius Magnes concerning the appearance of the angels to Abraham: "As the angels appeared often in the form of men, they were not that which appeared, but that which they were, that is, invisible."²⁸ Nicephorus persisted in his belief in the willful tamperings of iconoclasts when he commented on this passage, "as if compensating for the things not adduced, he introduces in the middle of the passage as an example the person of the patriarch Abraham."²⁹ For iconophiles, Abraham was one of the most venerable instances of witness to angelic epiphany.³⁰ But he did

27. *De Magnete*, I.41, Pitra I:326.35–327.13: "For one must note that after the author has said, 'Certainly [he does not make] their images formed in outline ...' [Blondel 214.15] the Christomachos again willfully takes away the phrase, 'as you yourself say,' [Blondel 214.15–16] in order that he seem credible to the readers. He thereby says that the author believes in the destruction of the holy icons, which the author does not believe. Rather he stands opposed to the faith of the Hellenes, as he said to the Hellene that he did not agree with him, providing the 'as you say' concerning the idols, statues and images of the gods. Moreover, those seeking to imitate the angelic way of life, in this fashion, which forbids and spurns, that is to say, the abominations of the idols, they make an end of the images. For opposing this, they are manifestly taking away the idols, and they have a horror of them, as loathsome and hateful."

28. Blondel 214.21–22, and *De Magnete*, I.42, Pitra I:327.16–19.

29. See *De Magnete*, I.43, Pitra I:327.20–37.

30. One might also expect, given the significance of Abraham's hospitality to the three "men" at Mamre for iconophile defense in the eighth and ninth centuries, a commensurate number of representations of the Philoxenia after Iconoclasm. Yet the Philoxenia is represented in the Chludov Psalter once (fol. 49v), in the context of its eucharistic symbolism and not as an epiphany. See Corrigan, *Visual Polemics*, 52ff. In the *Sacra Parallelia* (Paris. gr. 923, fol. 245r), the middle of the three angels is depicted without a crossed-nimbus and relates the Christological symbolism of the event like the Chludov illustration. See K.

not create a commemorative image, and this oversight needed explaining since iconoclasts could forcefully point to the lack of mention of material testimonial in scripture. Nicephorus explained the lapse between witness in the Old Covenant and their apparent failure to commemorate the event by first citing a passage by Macarius Magnes: “And as these things occurred wisely and in truth, Abraham did not outline the appearance of these visions, nor did he carve an idol in resemblance nor did he paint a panel, thinking to see the strangers in these things.”³¹ Nicephorus’s subsequent explanation fell back on the belief in a historical lapse into idolatry by the Jews that necessitated the Second Commandment, but ultimately rested on the charge of falsification and misrepresentation of the original text of Macarius’s dialogue.³²

Yet the real reason for the discussion of Macarius Magnes must have been iconoclastic emphasis on the ethical, “true” image. According to Milton Anastos, this emphasis dates to the Hieria of 754 and was, therefore, a central argument against material images in worship from the early stages of Iconoclasm.³³ In the iconoclastic formulation of “images,” “one should put reliance, not upon pictorial representations, but upon the scriptures and the biographies of the saints.”³⁴ As Anastos noted, the Fathers quoted at the Council of 754 dealt primarily with spiritual worship. The Council cited Basil the Great (ca. 330–379):

The study of the holy writings constitutes the best path to the ascertainment of what is proper, because they provide a guide for

Weitzmann, *The Miniatures of the Sacra Parallelia. Parisinus graecus 923* (Princeton, 1979) 40, fig. 27.

31. Blondel 215,30–32.

32. *De Magnete*, I.43, Pitra I:328.3–17: “For it is not likely that the patriarch being a friend of God would be induced into error of the superstitious persons of that time, only just having risen above the manufacture of idols. And it is necessary to note that one must supply the things there left out, that is to say, ‘as you say.’ The Hellene, who had been inserted above, after it has, ‘Certainly [he does not make] their images formed in outline . . .’” (Blondel 214,15–16).

33. See M. V. Anastos, “The Ethical Theory of Images Formulated by the Iconoclasts in 754 and 815,” *DOP* 8(1954):151–60.

34. Anastos, “The Ethical Theory of Images,” 153.

conduct, together with the biographies of the blessed ones, that serve as living images of a godly life and the inspiration for the emulation of god-like behaviour.³⁵

Iconophiles did not oppose this emphasis on spiritual worship, and they even interpreted such worship as a commendable mode of adoration of God. However, iconophiles saw the consequent dismissal of images by iconoclasts as obdurate and willful behavior; by dismissing images, iconoclasts were denying an equally venerable means of adoring and comprehending God. Both sides could, in fact, support the importance of the ethical image, but from entirely divergent perspectives. Moreover, these divergent perspectives on ethics and worship of images of angels parallel practice as seen in miracle stories, as the following section will demonstrate. This long-standing concern over angels and their images influenced image theory and practice both, and it led to serious divergences in opinion during Iconoclasm: suspended between humanity and God, angels demanded particular treatment, and iconophile texts clearly reveal the complexities of this peculiar case.

HAGIOGRAPHICAL VIEWS

Miracle stories of the angels produced before, during and after Iconoclasm were directly influenced by this debate over worship proper to angels and their images. By examining the traces of this debate in miracle stories, this section demonstrates that the concerns of image theory extended beyond limited theological circles into the public realm. Miracle stories of angels, in the hands of either iconoclasts or iconophiles, were intended to provide persuasive examples of correct worship of angels and images through forceful and compelling narratives of divine interventions. In this way, these didactic texts parallel the concerns of the more rarefied image theory.

In the period preceding Iconoclasm, proper worship of angels did include images; in practice, images of angels could express both doc-

35. Mansi XIII:300AB; trans. Anastos, “The Ethical Theory of Images,” 154–55.

trinal concerns and exegesis of nature and identity. This incorporation of images into worship likewise appeared in miracle stories. The *Miracles of St. Artemius*, written in the 660s about Artemius's shrine in the church of John the Baptist in Oxeia at Constantinople, contained the earliest description of images of angels in a miracle story. It described, moreover, the complete integration by the seventh century of images of the saints into popular piety.³⁶ In one of the episodes, a young girl, Euphemia, saw two angels in a night vision; in the morning, she identified them by reference to icons hanging in the church.³⁷

The saints' lives of the sixth and seventh centuries testified to an increased importance of images in miracles of healing and other interventions by saints. The miracle story of Artemius is replete with miracles that occurred at his shrine, often effected through his images.³⁸ And other pre-iconoclastic miracle stories attested further the central role images were assuming in devotion; these texts showed that the faithful increasingly perceived images as signs of the presence of the saint and as a means by which Christians could encourage the saints' activity and protection.³⁹ A seventh-century text, once ascribed to Athanasius of Alexandria (ca. 296–373), for one, defended images on the grounds that the miracles performed by images irrefutably demonstrated images' divine qualities. Furthermore, the author ranked images as a match to relics in sanctity and dignity, and as equally able to perform miracles of healing and exorcism.⁴⁰ This

36. On this question, see V. Déroche, "L'authenticité de l'*Apologie contre les Juifs* de Léontios de Neapolis," *Bulletin de correspondance hellénique* 110(1986):658ff., and also his, "L'*Apologie contre les Juifs* de Léontios de Néapolis," *TM* 12(1994):85ff.; and E. Kitzinger, "The Cult of Images in the Age Before Iconoclasm," *DOP* 8(1954):96ff., and, in particular, 107 on Artemius.

37. V.S Crisafulli and J.W. Nesbitt, *The Miracles of St. Artemios. A Collection of Miracle Stories by an Anonymous Author of Seventh-Century Byzantium* (Leiden, New York and Köln, 1997) 176–84. And see C. Mango, "On the History of the Templon and the Martyrion of St. Artemios at Constantinople," *Zograf* 10(1979):40–43.

38. For instance, Crisafulli/Nesbitt, *The Miracles of St. Artemios*, 88.7 and 108.4.

39. For example, Cosmas and Damian, L. Deubner, *Kosmas und Damian. Texte und Einleitung* (Leipzig, 1907) 133.23–24, and Theodore of Sykeon, *Vie de Théodore de Sykéon*, ed. A.-J. Festugière, 2 vols. (Brussels, 1970) I:32.9–13, I:39.5–6.

40. *Quaest. ad Ant. Duc.*, XXXIX, PG 28:621CD.

early devotion included images of angels, as the miracle at the shrine of Artemius showed, but the lives of saints of the eighth and ninth centuries offered alternate models of access to angels, and to the saints more generally.

The miracle story of the Archangel Michael at Chonae, the *Narration of the Miracle Accomplished at Chonae by the Archangel Michael*, re-worked in the eighth century, related a pattern of worship that conformed to the ethical models stressed in the Iconoclastic debates.⁴¹ In so doing, it avoided patterns found in the *Miracles of St Artemius* which relied upon images for access to, and provisional identification of, spiritual beings. The Chonae text offered a paradigm of behavior for approaching an angel and receiving the benefits of that proper approach. The miracle story, and its message, were neither overtly iconoclastic nor iconophile. Yet it has common elements with “non-iconophile” miracle stories analyzed by Marie-France Auzépy, and these common elements provided a discrete iconoclastic context for the Chonae miracle story.⁴²

41. The first recension of the Chonae hagiography, and clearly the model for later texts, was edited with commentary by Bonnet [= *AB* 8(1889):289–307]. Bonnet placed the hagiography between the fifth and seventh century. Examining Bonnet’s evidence, William Ramsay thought the anonymous text was not earlier than the ninth century, citing the local names employed in the text as proof of this date. See W. Ramsay, *The Church in the Roman Empire Before 170 A.D.* (New York and London, 1893) 468, 478. However, the name change sometime in the course of the eighth century is the *terminus post quem* because the miracle is said to have occurred at Chonae itself, and the hagiography is most likely from an eighth-century milieu. Other versions survive: Symeon Metaphrastes (d. ca. 1000) produced a version (Bonnet, 20–28 = *AB* 8(1889):308–16), and Sissinius wrote a hagiography of Michael at Chonae in the late tenth century, *Acta apparitionis in Chonis*, in *AASS*, Sept. 8:41–49). And Pantaleon (late ninth/early tenth century) mentioned the miracle in his *Sermo festo S. Michaelis Archangelis* (*PG* 98:1264A). See, for complete references for the hagiographies of Michael, *Bibliotheca hagiographica graeca*, ed. F. Halkin, 3 vols. (Brussels, 1957) II:118–21, nos. #1282ff.

42. M.-F. Auzépy, “L’analyse littéraire et l’historien: l’exemple des vies de saints iconoclastes,” *BS* 53(1992):57–67. She analyzed four hagiographies: the lives of Philaretus (702–792), George of Amastris (d. 802–807), Eudocimus (807–840) and Leo of Catania (fl. second half of the eighth century). The first three were discussed by I. Ševčenko, “Hagiography of the Iconoclast Period,” in *Iconoclasm. Papers given at the Ninth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, University of Birmingham, March 1975*, ed. A. Bryer and J. Herrin (Birmingham, 1977) 113–31. The last life has been edited by A. Accocia Longo, “La vita de S. Leone di Catania e gli incantesimi del mago Eliodoro,” *RSBN* 26(1989):3–98; subsequently, she refuted Auzépy’s interpretations in “A proposito di un articolo recente sul-

The miracle story of the Archangel Michael at Chonae was an apologetic text intended to communicate models of proper and successful devotion to an audience. In the tale, a group of pagans threatened the hermit Archippus and the shrine of the Archangel Michael with a series of destructive plots; eventually, they dammed two local rivers in order to flood the area and overwhelm shrine and inhabitant. With the waters approaching, the Archangel Michael appeared, addressed the hermit and, by striking the rock before the shrine, created a source for the famous healing spring (fig. 15). The miracle story had the basic goal of glorification, edification and conversion of the worshipper to an orthodox position. It lauded the work of the leader of the heavenly host in this world and established a framework of approach for the common worshipper.

The text also worked to convince an audience of access to Michael, and, through Michael, to God. A key term in the text was “*parrēsia*” ($\pi\alpha\rho\rho\eta\sigma\acute{\alpha}$), which can be rendered as “familiarity” or “patronage” or even “boldness.”⁴³ The classical meaning was “freedom of speech,” but by the Byzantine period the word had taken on a broader meaning that in the devotional context implied mediation between divinity and humanity made successful by proper preparation. At Chonae, the miracle was accomplished “through the grace and familiarity ($\pi\alpha\rho\rho\eta\sigma\acute{\alpha}$)” (1.6) of Michael with God; at a later stage in the miracle story, the same familiarity was passed on to the distraught hermit, when Michael commanded Archippus, “Be bold, and come towards me so that the approaching rivers will not devour you” (15.11–12).⁴⁴ Thus, the miracle story signaled the completion of the hierarchy, ascending from the holy man to the Archangel to God. To a lesser degree, this familiarity or access was offered to the reader/listener according to his or her worthiness and ability to comprehend.

l’agiografia iconoclasta.” *RSBN* 29(1992):3–17. Auzépy and Acconcia Longo offered final defenses in *RSBN* 30(1993):3–15.

See also V. Deroche, “L’autorité des moines à Byzance du VIIIe siècle au Xe siècle,” *Revue Bénédictine* 103(1993):241–54, on related issues.

43. On *parrēsia*, see C. Mango, *Byzantium. The Empire of New Rome* (London, 1980) 159.

44. All citations in the text refer to Bonnet.

Although this “familiarity” or “boldness” ($\pi\alpha\rho\rho\eta\sigma\acute{\alpha}$) was not peculiar to the cult of the Archangel Michael,⁴⁵ the incomprehensible nature of the Archangel made “access” more difficult than to the mortal saints. The unique nature of the angels and the archangels, hovering between heaven and earth, was the basis for this difficulty. The incomprehensible nature of the appearances and the miracles of the Archangel must be understood in ways outside of the purely rational.⁴⁶ As Philoxenus of Mabbug (ca. 440–523) wrote concerning angels, faith was paradoxically the first step to comprehension.⁴⁷ The angels clearly were a special problem in terms of devotion and approach. The angels’ particular nature and qualities demanded individual treatment in theological texts, and miracle stories also acknowledged these distinctions.

In the miracle story, jealous rumblings began among the locals on account of the great success of the spring, and open insurrection against the shrine was not long in appearing. In the meantime, the miracle story introduced a “dishonourable and idolatrous” pagan, from the nearby city of Laodicea (3.14ff.). This pagan had a daughter who was deaf and dumb. Michael appeared in a dream and told him to go to the shrine, and “by my name, if you believe, you will not leave disappointed” (4.5). The pagan then traveled to the spring and questioned those at the spring about the healing process. He was told that one must call on the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost,

45. For instance, see Kazhdan / Maguire, “Byzantine Hagiographical Texts,” 14.

46. See Metrophanes, Metropolitan of Smyrna ca. 857–880, who says that the Archangel Michael and Gabriel are great, but small are the means to describe them, “Your [Michael and Gabriel’s] image is broad and elevated in being and manifold in its bodiless and immaterial and entirely splendid shape, but the word, coming from our hearts through corporeal organs, is narrow and humble and artless.” A little below he adds that it is necessary for the archangels “to illuminate the intellectual eyes of our hearts.” The text is found in *Εκκλησιαστικὴ Ἀληθεία* 7(1887):390.

47. See his sermon “On Faith,” trans. E.A.W. Budge, *The Discourses of Philoxenus Bishop of Mabbōgh, A.D. 485–519. Vol. II. Introduction, Translation, etc.* (London, 1894) 29–31. For Pantaleon, the process of apprehension is also indirect, “You illuminate our intellectual eyes of the heart, so that we should know, and apprehend in the mind and pronounce … the miracles of your majesty.” See his *Nar. mir. max. Arch. Mich.*, II, PG 140: 575A. Much later, Damaskenos Stoudite (sixteenth century) wrote, “On account of this, open your spiritual and corporeal eyes, so that you can understand precisely what I am about to say.” (See his *Θησαυρός* [Venice, 1838] 185.)

and to Michael, and then raising one's hands and eyes to heaven say, "O Father, O Son, O Holy Ghost, through the ministry of Michael, help me, a sinful person" (4.11–13). He then poured water into the mouth of his child saying, rather alarmingly, "The God of the Christians, your power is truly great, Michael Archistrategos" (4.15–16).⁴⁸ The daughter of the pagan was forthwith healed, and the pagan with his entire household was baptized on the spot. Finally, he built there a small chapel in the name of Michael in order to shelter the holy source.

The statement of the subservience of Michael to God in the prayers of the pagan was part of the appeal of the miracle story in the eighth- and ninth-century "non-iconophile" context of debate over proper worship. Michael himself at a later point stated the source of his own power as he commanded the water to flow harmlessly into the chasm that he had opened in the name of the Trinity. Michael had made the water halt moments before by making the sign of the cross in the face of the rushing waters. These were statements then of a scale of access or "*parrēsia*" that communicated to the audience of the miracle story where Michael stood in the divine hierarchy, that is, under the command of God.

The holy man, Archippus, was at the ethical center of the miracle story in the sense that he described, in his faultless way of life and correct appeal to God, the proper model of behavior for the audience. This ethical model was fundamental to the structure of the miracle story in that the large part of the miracle story described the hermit's way of life and qualifications. Moreover, this character study provided the miracle story's "image" for Christians to try to imitate. The epiphany of the Archangel Michael in comparison was not described to the same degree as the character of the hermit, and Archippus also figured significantly in the encounter between angel and man after the epiphany. Nonetheless, nothing about Archippus would appear to be individualized. Even his name would seem to be

48. See the Introduction on the overweening position Michael was put in by certain heterodox adherents at Chonae.

borrowed from the Epistle to the Colossians (4:17).⁴⁹ Archippus came to the shrine of the Archangel, the narrator of the miracle story stated (5.6ff.), when he was only a precocious ten-year-old, having left his parents in Laodicea to take up the ascetic way of life.⁵⁰ In this way, ninety years after its foundation, the shrine got its first caretaker, Archippus.⁵¹ The description of his life after his commitment to Michael's shrine was largely undistinguished. It was apparently cobbled together from various ascetic sources and was mainly a remembrance of other familiar texts.⁵² Archippus's anonymity made him an "everyman" that all Christians could aspire to imitate.⁵³

The Chonae miracle story described a way of life familiar to miracle stories for its guileless devotion and comfortless longevity. The narrator clearly wanted to convince the audience of Archippus's worthiness. Archippus spent the next sixty years perfecting himself in his vocation, his angelic way of life ("ἀσκησις ἀγγελική," 7.11 and 8.7).⁵⁴ He never ate bread or meat, nor did he bathe; he ate boiled wild plants without salt; he sprinkled his honorable body with three

49. Ramsay, *The Church in the Roman Empire Before 170 A.D.*, 469. According to P. Battifol, *Studiorum patristicorum. Études d'ancienne littérature chrétienne*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1889–1890) I:33, this hermit in the hagiography is perhaps a true survival of the real Archippus mentioned at Col. 4:17.

50. A. G. Elliott, *Roads to Paradise. Reading the Lives of the Early Saints* (Hanover and London, 1987) 77ff., has described certain characteristics of the childhood of hagiographic heroes.

51. See C. Mango, "Germia: A Postscript," in *JöB* 41(1991):298–99, on προσμονάριος.

52. Some examples taken from the *Lausiac History* of Palladius (ca. 363–ca. 431): *The Lausiac History of Palladius*, ed. C. Butler, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1898–1904) II:15–16, 16–17, 29, 48, 60–61, and Bonnet xxii n1, for others.

53. I follow this idea in hagiography, liturgy and art in my "Holy Man, Suppliant and Donor: On Representations of the Miracle of the Archangel Michael at Chonae," *Mediaeval Studies* 59(1997):173–82.

54. Elliott, *Roads to Paradise*, 132ff., has noted the opposition of nature and culture with regard to the position of the hermit. On the topos of monks as angels, see P. S. Frank, ΑΓΓΕΛΙΚΟΣ ΒΙΟΣ. *Begriffsanalytische und begriffsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zum "Engelgleichen Leben" im frühen Mönchtum* (Münster, 1964). And Peter Brown's remarks on the de-gendering of monks through the simile of angelic qualities has interesting possibilities. See "The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity, 1971–1997," *JECS* 6(1998): 371–72. The confrontation of monk and angel at Chonae, in literature and art, also has a potential for elevation of the everyman Archippus. Raised to exalted company, he joins these celestial ranks through his extra-terrestrial vocation.

measures of water one day out of three, and in this way refreshed his soul; for clothing he wore two sacks and he slept on stones with a pillow filled with thorns; never did he relax, or reveal his body, all the while guarding his stainless soul from belonging to the other one (that is, the devil). The value of such an anonymous portrait at the center of this text lay in Archippus's quality as a model for imitation. Not everyone would be capable of this demanding way of life. At an elevated level, Archippus figured as an exemplar who might be out of reach to many in his worthiness but who at least presented an ideal of approach to the Archangel and, most important, of answered prayer.⁵⁵

Archippus's reaction to the threat of the pagans is instructive. The group of several thousand, seething with hatred and envy of Archippus, the shrine, and their patron, were impressively bestial, and were thus fundamentally distinct from the holy man. They roared like lions (8.15) and gnashed their teeth in working out their wicked designs.⁵⁶ As Archippus saw the designs of the devil and the unclean things of the idolaters, he attempted to counter the base workings of the pagans by going into the church where he fell as if dead. He beseeched God and the Archangel Michael to guard the shrine from the approaching water, and spent ten days neither eating nor drinking nor raising himself from the floor. He said,

I do not depart from this church nor do I leave off from prayer but I will die by this water. For I believe that my God will save me from faintness and tempestuousness through the agency of the Archangel Michael so that it will make no mark either on this holy shrine or on this land ... (13.10–14).⁵⁷

55. The idea of the holy man as exemplar, of course, has deep roots in Late Antique and Byzantine society, and it also informed the iconoclastic image of the ideal Christian discussed in chapter 2. On the holy man in Late Antiquity, see M. Vessey, "The Demise of the Christian Writer and the Remaking of 'Late Antiquity': From H.-I. Marrou's Saint Augustine (1938) to Peter Brown's Holy Man (1983)," *JECS* 6(1998):403–11.

56. In the *Menologium Basilianum* (late tenth/early eleventh century), *PG* 117:33C. Also, Bonnet 3.9 and 5.3.

57. Chrysippus (ca. 405–479) described Daniel and his preparations for the epiphany (Dan. 10:2–3): "In those days I Daniel was in mourning three whole weeks. I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till

For ten days, the pagans stored up the water behind their dams and on the tenth day they unleashed the rivers. Archippus, hearing the advancing waters crush the rocks, intensified his prayers, and wet with tears called on God once more, reciting Psalm 93, particularly lines 3–5:

The floods have lifted up, O Lord, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their waves. The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea. Thy testimonies are very sure: holiness becometh thine house, O Lord for ever.⁵⁸

When Archippus had finished the Psalm, there came from outside a great clap of thunder and the Archistrategos came “to that place, standing on the head of the impenetrable rock” (14.17–18). Archippus’s access to the Archangel, his recommendation to “*parrēsia*,” was founded on his unimpeachable way of life, and proved by the Archangel’s intervention on his behalf. Archippus “pursues the angelic life while in the flesh” and, therefore, was worthy of visions (24.7).⁵⁹

The goal in devotion to Michael was an access from which benefit derives, and this access was made possible through the paradigm of approach present in the miracle story. This conclusion was latent in the anonymous version and explicit in later versions of the miracle. “Therefore truly we shall imitate this wondrous Archippus, this worthy one himself, [who] on account of his excellence was made most familiar to the great Archangel Michael and was revealed a vision....”⁶⁰ Only the just and righteous were allowed into the presence of the angels, for protection and revelation, as Paul warned in

three whole weeks were fulfilled.” He then went on to describe what Daniel saw at Dan. 10:5, 12:5, and Michael’s identification at 10:12–13. See A. Sigalas, “Χρυσίππου πρεσβυτέρου Ἐγκάμιον εἰς Ἀρχάγγελον Μιχαήλ,” *EEBS* 3(1926):90, 17ff.

58. In the Theodore Psalter (1066), British Museum Add. 19.352, fol. 125r, the scene of the miracle at Chonae illustrates just this passage from Psalm 93. See S. Der Nersessian, *L’illustration des psautiers grecs du Moyen Age. II. Londres, Add. 19.352* (Paris, 1970) 46, fig. 203.

59. Here Sissinius, *Acta apparitionis in Chonis*, 9, *AASS Sept.* 8:44F, “βίον ισάγγελον ἐν σαρκὶ μετερχόμενος.”

60. Sissinius, *Acta apparitionis in Chonis*, 18, *AASS Sept.* 8:47B.

1 Corinthians 11:10.⁶¹ The miracle was proof of the promise made on proper approach for all worshippers, exemplified by the generalized but scrupulous Archippus. The only miracle performed by Archippus was the successful answering of his extensive prayer, and for that one power he was worthy of emulation.⁶²

Auzépy has noted the lack of miracles performed by subjects of saints' lives of the eighth and ninth centuries.⁶³ Although Archippus was not himself active in good works in a community, the legend dated from before Iconoclasm, and must have retained some of its original elements. Its rewriting and elaboration in the eighth century must have been connected to the contemporary appeal of the legend. In the Chonae miracle story, it is significant that the central character lacks any miraculous power. Archippus's abilities were restricted to, and made laudable by, a holy life and energetic prayer.

Some modern commentators, typically historians of the nineteenth century, have criticized the miracle story of Chonae for its lack of inventiveness, focusing on the generalized portrait of Archippus, a holy man with no real personality. This generalization works to a purpose, however, presenting a behavior meant to persuade its audience of the best route to fulfilled entreaty. Commentators have accused the narrator of the anonymous version of being artless, rude in style, and incomplete in knowledge of the event and region.⁶⁴ However, repetition of details in miracle stories and saints' lives, often cited derogatorily by modern commentators, comply with audience expectations of recognizable patterns.⁶⁵ In the mind of the writ-

61. See J.A. Fitzmeyer, "A New Feature of Qumrân Angelology and the Angels of I Cor. XI:10," *New Testament Studies* n.s. 4(1957/8):55–56. The idea of the unblemished being allowed into the presence of the angels is one found in Jewish apocrypha and the Qumran texts, although with a visionary quality not often found in the Christian texts; see G. Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1962) 76.

62. Contrast the lack of Archippus's own power with examples of the might some saints do exhibit given by R. Browning, "The 'Low Level' Saint's Life in the Early Byzantine World," in *The Byzantine Saint*, ed. S. Hackel (London, 1981) 122.

63. Auzépy, "L'analyse littéraire et l'historien," 60, and Ševčenko, "The Hagiography of the Iconoclast Period," 120ff.

64. For example, see Ramsay, *The Church in the Roman Empire Before 170 A.D.*, 468, and Bonnet vi.

65. See Elliott, *Roads to Paradise*, and also *Holy Women of the Syrian Orient*, ed. S.A. Harvey and S. Brock (Berkeley, 1987) 13ff.

ers of miracle stories and saints' lives, edification—as well as “access”—was the key to these texts, and ethical truth was far more important than historical accuracy. The aim of the miracle story of Chonae was not to provide a topographical survey or an historically accurate document: rather it was to provide a model for imitation in veneration and a confirmation of the proximity of the Archangel at a given site. For this reason, the later writers of the miracle at Chonae of the ninth and tenth centuries did not alter the basic structure of the anonymous version but merely added their own flourishes to a successful text.⁶⁶ And it must also be stressed that the miracle story could have posed no threat to the church after 843; images and idolatry do not figure, but the text provided a portrait of a holy way of life and seemly angel worship which became very popular indeed after Iconoclasm.⁶⁷

A further similarity of the Chonae miracle story with “non-iconophile” saints’ lives was the importance placed on references to Hebrew scripture. The prophets, patriarchs, and kings of Hebrew scripture figured in the texts Auzépy discussed, rather than models derived from the saints of Church tradition.⁶⁸ The encounter of holy man and angel at Chonae, as described in the miracle story, was very

66. See Bonnet xii, on the working methods of Metaphrastes and Sissinius.

67. Archippus’s prayer is a fruitful act for angelic intervention and the active element in his piety is recognized in depictions by his gesture of imprecation, as well as the accompanying inscription. In the representation of the scene in the Church of the Asomatoi at Archanes on Crete from 1315/6, the inscription accompanying the image states that the miracle occurred “because of Archippus’s prayers.” See S. Koukiares, Τὰ θαύματα—Ἐμφάνισεις τῶν Ἀγγέλων καὶ Ἀρχαγγέλων στήν Βυζαντίνη Τέχνη τῶν Βαλκανίων (Athens, 1989) 70, “ΘΑΤΜΑ ΤΟ ΤΩΝ EN T(ΑΙΣ) ΧΩΝΑΙΣ ΝΑΟΝ ΤΟΥ MIXAHΛ/TΟΥ APXIΣΤΡΑΤΗΓΟΥ, ΔΙ ΕΤΧΩΝ ΑΡΧΙΠΠΟΥ.”

Ironically, the sixteenth-century hagiographer, Damaskenos Stoudite, states that Archippus prayed to an icon for the intervention of the Archangel in the face of the pagan floods. See his *Θησαυρός*, 198.

A further irony is evident in the frescoes, ca. 1500, in the Church of Cosmas and Damian, Palaiochorio in the Troodos, Cyprus. In these frescoes, the donor has supplanted Archippus and is represented before the Archangel in the miracle at Chonae. See S. Gabelić, “The Iconography of the Miracle at Chonae. An Unusual Example from Cyprus,” *Zograf* 20 (1989):95–103, and Peers, “Holy Man, Supplicant and Donor.”

68. Auzépy, “L’analyse littéraire et l’historien,” 58ff. See, however, the remarks of D. Krueger, “Typological Figuration in Theodoret of Cyrrhus’s *Historia Religiosa* and the Art of Postbiblical Narrative,” *JECS* 5 (1997):393–417.

much within the scriptural structure of divine epiphany as found in the accounts of Moses, Joshua, Daniel and Isaiah in Hebrew scripture.⁶⁹ Furthermore, the encounter indicated the difficulties—often described in Hebrew scripture—attendant in confronting and perceiving an angelic being. Archippus weathered this confrontation and emerged as not unworthy of comparison to ancient examples of witnesses to epiphany; he did not worship the Archangel but humbly followed orders, and afterwards expressed gratitude for the safeguarding of the shrine and his own escape.

The *Vita* of Leo of Catania, dating to the first half of the ninth century, presented behavior which contrasts starkly with Archippus's propriety. In this miracle story, a magus by the name of Heliodorus introduced idolatry into the city in the form of an idol (*ξόανον*) of an aerial deity; the idol was also designated as a “sign” (*στοιχεῖον*), recalling a talisman through which a demon works and, more generally, the magic arts Heliodorus practiced.⁷⁰ Auzépy interpreted this episode as an inversion whereby the iconoclastic sympathies of the saint's life were revealed.⁷¹ The antagonist of the saint's life, Heliodorus, was a magician, that is, one who worked wonders or even miracles; significantly, he also worshipped idols. Auzépy sees idols in this context to mean any image, and so denoting all image worshippers, since Heliodorus was intended as an iconophile anti-hero in the saint's life; the aerial deity was also strikingly suggestive of all images of winged beings, notably angels. Although not delineated to the same degree as Heliodorus, Leo of Catania, the real hero of the text, derived his sanctity from his social standing as priest and his good deeds which did not include miracles or image worship. Moreover, Leo replaced the statue which Heliodorus worshipped with a cross, the favored iconoclastic sign.⁷²

69. On this structural similarity, see also chapter 5.

70. Acconcia Longo, “La vita de S. Leone di Catania,” 89.21–26 (#8). And see also C. Blum, “The Meaning of *στοιχεῖον* and its Derivatives in the Byzantine Age. A Study in Byzantine Magic,” *Eranos* 44(1946):315–25.

71. Auzépy, “L'analyse littéraire et l'historien,” 62ff.

72. Acconcia Longo, “La vita de S. Leone di Catania,” 97.1–7 (#18).

In this sense, too, Archippus could be considered to be a hero of the iconoclastic cause: his way of life was the focus of the miracle story rather than any miraculous deeds or interventions. The standard of behavior and the rigor of his prayer were clearly the persuasive means by which the audience was meant to be won over to a proper and efficacious worship. Moreover, like Abraham, Archippus did not make an image in commemoration.⁷³ He guarded the memory of a difficult but enlightening experience in his soul. Finally, he did not lapse into worship of the Archangel himself, and fall into pagan ways, as iconoclastic sources forewarned.

The patriarch Nicephorus (ca. 750–828) fully agreed with the position on idols and worship expressed by the fourth-century anti-image theologians Macarius Magnes and Epiphanius: one should not make idols of angels after the pagan fashion, neither should one worship them. Yet Nicephorus was unwilling to dismiss images commemorating interventions from worship on this account. On the one hand, for Nicephorus and other iconophiles, material objects were appropriate intermediaries for directing honor toward such spiritual beings as angels. Iconoclasts, on the other hand, denied the value of such distracting intermediaries, particularly in the case of such unrepresentable entities. For them, angels and their images had too many inherent dangers for Christians to negotiate. Rather, listening to the text—scripture or, as here, miracle stories—and hearkening to its message was proper and intellectual worship that allowed the reader/listener to ascend to spiritual truths without hindrance. Iconoclastic theology simply could not countenance any mediating steps, especially material ones, between worshipper and spiritual reality. Ethical instruction through persuasive texts such as miracle stories and saints' lives cre-

73. According to Sissinius, after Michael's disappearance Archippus retired to the shrine and returned to prayer. "The venerable one saw him as if a flame of fire streamed up into the heavens, [and] filled with puzzlement and fear, he went back to sing psalms in the holy shrine, 'God has sent his angel and liberated and saved me from the snares of the beasts, and he guarded his sacred shrine from the inundation of the waters.'" See *Acta apparitionis in Chonis*, 18, AASS Sept. 8:47AB.

ated a “true image” for the behavior and beliefs of conscientious Christians.

Although the Chonae miracle story must have been written or re-worked as a consequence of the debates over worship in the eighth century, it was not dismissed after Iconoclasm. The text provided valid models of worship within the iconophile position as well. Indeed, the miracle was retold by Pantaleon in the late ninth/early tenth century and Sissinius and Symeon Metaphrastes in the tenth century; all of these redactions depended upon the anonymous text of the eighth century. Furthermore, the iconography of the miracle is first found in the tenth century, and it became popular thereafter, as the gorgeous twelfth-century icon from Sinai can attest (fig. 15).⁷⁴ The text did not dismiss images, but did describe a successful and orthodox form of worship; in this sense, Archippus was the miracle story’s “true image.” The Chonae story’s models of worship had relevance for both sides of this controversy, and, like the *Vita* of Leo of Catania, they must be seen within the context of debates over images of aerial deities and angels both. And the issue of angelolatry and idolatry are also present in this text as at Chonae since for iconoclasts the two forms of unsuitable worship were inseparable.

One final example of a miracle story including angels serves to show that in the period following Iconoclasm proper worship was again integrated with images, thereby coming full circle with the means of healing described in the seventh-century collection of miracles by Artemius. A miracle that occurred at the church of Michael at Eusebios in Constantinople, described by Pantaleon in his *Narration of the Miracles of the Mighty Archangel Michael*, illustrated this transition from the behavioral model of the Chonae miracle story to

74. The first extant representation of the miracle is found in the Church of St. John, north chapel #4, at Güllü Dere (ca. 900). See N. Thierry, *Haut moyen-age en Cappadoce. Les églises de la région de Cavusin* (Paris, 1983) 155–56, pl. 71; C. Jolivet-Lévy, *Les églises byzantines de Cappadoce. Le programme iconographique de l'abside et ses abords* (Paris, 1991) 37ff. The earliest example of an illustration of the miracle at Chonae, in the canonical scheme, is found in the late tenth-/early eleventh-century *Menologium* of Basil II (Vat. gr. 1613, page 17). The iconography of the miracle is treated thoroughly by Gabelić, “The Iconography of the Miracle at Chonae,” 96–98.

orthodox worship that includes icons.⁷⁵ The miracle occurred immediately following the reintroduction of images in the reign of Michael III (842–867) under the regency of his mother, Theodora.

The story described Marcianus, a candle maker, and a godly servant of the shrine of Michael. Marcianus was never ill, according to the miracle story, but if he felt the slightest pain he needed only go into the church in order to recover. Once, however, Marcianus became ill and went to the shrine, but not before he was convinced by one of the doctors who congregated around the church to wear a poultice with some medicine. That night Marcianus slept in the church, as was the custom at this shrine, and, as in an ecstasy, he saw a terrifying vision. All the doors of the church were suddenly flung open and towards him came “a fearful man as out of the heaven, with a rush descending on a white and terrible steed.” This man got down from the horse and entered the church with an escort, dressed in the costume of court officials. The church also became suffused with an unworldly odor. After a moment, the man came to Marcianus’s cot and inspecting the recumbent man found the doctor’s medicine. He asked Marcianus what it was and identified himself by demanding who had dared bring such medicine into his house. Marcianus told him, and Michael sent his minions off to find the unfortunate doctor. Michael then took Marcianus to a candle hanging before an icon of the Archangel, dipped his finger in the oil, and made the sign of the cross on the patient’s forehead. Michael got back on his horse and rode off into the heavens. Straightaway all the doors of the church closed by themselves and Marcianus was left to marvel.

In the morning, Marcianus told his vision to the deacon who, seeing the cross on the man’s forehead, believed all he had been told. The deacon then sent to discover what had happened to the doctor

75. Pantaleon, *Narr. mir. max. Arch. Mich.*, XXVI–XXVIII, PG 140:586A–8A, and F. Halkin, *Inédits byzantins d’Ochrida, Candie et Moscou* (Brussels, 1963) 147ff.

The text in praise of the Archangels Michael and Gabriel by Michael of Stoudios (late ninth century) also described the connection between icons and healing. See “*Éloge des archanges Michel et Gabriel par Michel le Moine (BHG 1294a)*,” ed. T. Matantseva, *JöB* 46(1996):145 (XI.8).

and learned that the doctor had taken gravely ill during the night. Marcianus went to the doctor, saw his suffering, and ordered that the doctor be brought on his bed to the shrine of Michael to beg forgiveness and mercy. Marcianus re-enacted the method of healing with the oil and icon shown to him by Michael, and so offered the shrine's model for successful healing; forthwith, the doctor was miraculously relieved of his suffering.

Clearly, this text fully integrated images and worship, a remarkable development when compared to the image-less miracle story of Michael at Chonae, and to the unflattering portrait of iconophile worship of angels' images in the *Vita* of Leo of Catania. Behavior was not in the first place the means of gaining an epiphany in the episode described by Pantaleon, but the Archangel himself demonstrated the methods of efficacious healing; this method of approach was convincing by its results and was henceforth reproduced (we are led to believe) at the shrine of Michael at Eusebios. In fact, the shrine with its icon and oil provided the only proper method, as the unfortunate doctor learned.

The assimilation of proper behavior and images was the outcome of this long-standing debate on worship. Icons did not exclude other approaches, like Christian virtue as a "true image," but they were now an inextricable component in a complete Christian ethic. Indeed, the ancient Christian custom of accepting images in worship that iconophiles defended in the ninth century has been seen in practice through these miracle stories and saints' lives: despite inherent difficulties in gaining likeness in art, images were granted relation to their models through practice, through the consensus of worship and, most dramatically, through the miraculous example of Michael himself in the shrine at Eusebios.

Five

APPREHENDING THE ARCHANGEL MICHAEL

MANUFACTURING SIGNS OF PRESENCE

This chapter examines the means by which hagiographical writings, that is, miracle stories, attempt to describe the presence and appearances of the Archangel Michael. Dealing with several miracle stories at some length demonstrates the ways in which each text persuades its audience of the Archangel's benign proximity. The tales of the miracle at Chonae contribute particularly in this examination since the "pre-history" of this cult is relatively clear and the shrine's activities during the Byzantine period were famous. Discussing other miracle stories, namely of the sanctuary at Monte Gargano in southern Italy and of the shrine in Asia Minor described by Michael Psellus (1018–1081?), allows certain structural similarities to emerge: the miracle stories reveal the Archangel Michael's elusive, elemental force active in a landscape and consequently bind him to places to strengthen expectation of worshippers' devotional return.

Several tales of the miracle at Chonae are extant, and, as accounts of the most popular miracle of Michael in the Byzantine world, they deserve special attention. All narrate the same series of events: a group of pagans attempt to destroy the shrine of Michael at Chonae

along with the guardian, Archippus, by flooding the vicinity. At the last moment, Michael appears and creates a chasm into which the water is forced to flow. The shrine and its newly fashioned spring henceforth work wonders.

The dating of the earliest miracle story cannot be decided with any finality, but more weight should be given to a late date, preferably in the eighth century, since the “lapses” in topographic detail in the miracle story point to a place of composition distant from the shrine itself and a time after the cult has been firmly established. This anonymous text, *Narration of the Miracle Accomplished at Chonae by the Archangel Michael*, was surely a reworking, however, of an early legend, since the cult of angels, and especially Michael, had an ancient history around Chonae. That the miracle story was re-worked in the eighth century attests to the popularity of the cult in the Byzantine world, but also to a contemporary relevance of its subject.¹

One can be certain, just the same, that the “inconsistencies” and “lapses” in the miracle story work to a purpose and communicate important information about the cult of the Archangel. Indeed, the stories of the miracle of the Archangel Michael at Chonae were persuasive texts, intended to communicate models of proper and successful devotion to an audience. The texts also worked to convince an audience of access to Michael, and through him God, guaranteed by the miracle and appearance of the Archangel at a holy place.

The quality of familiarity with the Archangel, however, is of a different order than that derived from “lives” of the mortal ranks of saints. As Symeon Metaphrastes (d. ca. 1000) wrote in the prologue to his version of the miracle at Chonae (20.8–12),

It is a great deal more beneficial to describe the details of the bodiless powers, to proclaim their heavenly portents and marvels. For by this how much more is familiarity and consort with God and these [powers] increased, by this how much greater the beneficence we harvest in these narratives concerning these [powers].²

1. See chapter 4.

2. All citations in the text refer to Bonnet.

The key term in this passage is “*parrēsia*” ($\pi\alpha\rho\rho\eta\sigma\acute{\alpha}$), which I have translated here as “consort” but which could also be rendered as “access” or “patronage” or even “boldness.”³ Although this “access” is not unique to the cult of the Archangel Michael, the incomprehensible nature of the Archangel made “access” more difficult than to the mortal saints. The cult of the Archangel Michael posed special problems for all aspects of devotion, based upon the unique, difficult nature of the angels and the archangels. The elemental qualities of Michael, which removed him from the more easily understood traits and operations of the once human saints, compounded this difficulty.

A *topos* of texts about the angels is the incomprehensibility of angelic beings and the insuperable distance that separates the angels from humanity. Despite its commonplace aspect, the *topos* has real meaning as a defining characteristic of the angels and archangels. Michael Psellus in his narrative in praise of the Archangel Michael stated that it is difficult to describe the deeds of humanity, but having surpassed any of these deeds the Archangel lies above in measure.⁴ Moreover, the Archangel remains beyond the praise deriving from speech, and is beyond the power of both the artful and artless.

3. On *parrēsia*, see E. Peterson, “Zur Bedeutungsgeschichte von $\pi\alpha\rho\rho\eta\sigma\acute{\alpha}$,” in *Reinhold Seeberg Festschrift*, ed. W. Koepp, 2 vols. (Leipzig, 1929) I:283–97; G. Scarpat, *Parresia. Storia del termine e delle sue traduzione in latino* (Brescia, 1963); P.S. Frank, ΑΙΤΤΕΛΙΚΟΣ ΒΙΟΣ. Begriffsanalytische und begriffsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zum “Engelgleichen Leben” im frühen Mönchtum (Münster, 1964) 67–68; G.J.M. Bartelink, “Quelques observations sur ΠΑΡΡΗΣΙΑ dans la littérature paléo-chrétienne,” in *Graecitas et latinitas christianorum primaeva*, suppl. 3 (Nijmegen, 1970) 5–57, 155–57; C. Mango, *Byzantium. The Empire of New Rome* (London, 1980) 159.

4. On this *encomium*, see Michael Psellus, *Oratio in Archangelum Michaelem*, in *Michaelis Pselli Orationes Hagiographicae*, ed. E.A. Fisher (Stuttgart and Leipzig, 1994) 230–56, as well as E.A. Fisher, “Nicomedia or Galatia? Where Was Psellos’ Church of the Archangel Michael?” in *Gonimos. Neoplatonic and Byzantine Studies Presented to Leendert G. Westerlink at 75*, ed. J. Duffy and J. Peradotto (Buffalo, 1988) 175–87, and C. Mango, “La croix dite de Michel le Céruleaire et la croix de Saint-Michel de Sykéon,” *CA* 36(1988): 41–49.

This *topos* of the author avowing inability to describe is also “an aesthetic choice bearing moral value.” See D. Krueger, “Hagiography as an Ascetic Practice in the Early Christian East.” *The Journal of Religion* 79(1999):216. But “authorial self-denigration” goes one step further for angels.

In other words, Michael surpasses the abilities of language to describe and honor. The difficulties of understanding are crucial since, as Psellus stated, the seeing and the hearing of a paradoxical, incomprehensible event establishes true faith.⁵ The incomprehensible nature of the appearances and the miracles of the Archangel must be understood in ways outside of the purely logical. Faith, in the face of the inexplicable event communicated by the miracle story, is the first step to comprehension. For Pantaleon, the process of apprehension is also indirect, “You illuminate our intellectual eyes of the heart, so that we should know, and apprehend in the mind and pronounce … the miracles of your majesty.”⁶ The difficulties inherent in the nature of the Archangel made for special problems of apprehension. For this reason, a textual and devotional footing distinct from the mortal saints determined access ($\pi\alpha\rho\rho\eta\sigma\iota\alpha$) to the Archangel.

Focusing on the generalized portrait of Archippus, a holy man with no real personality, some modern commentators have criticized the anonymous text describing the miracle at Chonae for its lack of inventiveness. Archippus came to the shrine as a boy and, as the miracle story describes it, he led an austere and, with one exception, an uneventful life. This generalization works to a purpose, however, in that it presents a behavior meant to persuade its audience of the best route to fulfilled entreaty. The narrator of the anonymous version has also been charged with being artless, rude in style, and incomplete in knowledge of the event and region.⁷ The burden of nineteenth-century rationalism doubtless blinkered these scholars to some of the positive aspects of the literary tradition of the Chonae miracle. Hopefully, some of these aspects will emerge from the discussion to follow.

5. Fisher, *Michaelis Pselli Orationes Hagiographicae*, 231.3ff. and 240.224–26.

6. *Narratio miraculorum maximi archangeli Michaelis*, II, PG 140:575AB.

7. W. Ramsay, *The Church in the Roman Empire Before 170 a.d.* (New York and London, 1893) 468. See also Bonnet, who comments on the lack of coherence and the implausible additions: “nec arte nec ingenio excellentis nec omnino tamen utroque carentis” (vi), and “Genus dicendi tale est fere quale ab eiusmodi narratore expectes, rude et impolitum, modo tritum et volgare modo arcessitum, modo humile et abiectum modo poeticis verbis infucatum, nonnullis locis etiam soloecum aut barbarum” (vii). The hagiography is not, however, without “viribus et nervis” (vii).

The manner in which the anonymous miracle story described the topography of the area of Chonae is undeniably imprecise. For example, the apostles Philip and John appear at Chairetopa, a town otherwise without importance,⁸ and predict the Archangel's appearance in the future; the story places Chairetopa some miles to the southeast of the shrine and is too far distant to be the site where Michael appeared and the famous church was built. The anonymous redactor of the miracle story evidently assumed that Chairetopa was in the vicinity of Chonae.⁹ Yet the etymology of the toponym may be worth remarking because the place name may then refer generally to the place of the encounter, a station then proleptic to the meeting of Michael and his client. Egregious, too, is the way in which the redactor describes the rivers in the area of Chonae.¹⁰ For example, the Lykokapros is a nonsensical combination of two rivers, and the Lykos itself is said to flow in a direction which is clearly errant. Because of these errors, William Ramsay and others have been willing to accept this miracle story as a kind of naive aetiology of a half-forgotten event concerning earthquake and water supplies.¹¹

8. K. Belke and N. Mersich, *Phrygien und Pisidien*, Tabula Imperii Byzantini, vol. 7 (Vienna, 1990) 221.

9. And this must have been the case, despite the inexactitude of the redactor's description. Chairetopa may have been to the south or west of Colossae. See L. Robert, *Villes d'Asie Mineure. Études de géographie antique* (Paris, 1935) 105ff., and further 105–106 n4: “Il n'y a rien à tirer de précis, pour la topographie, de cet absurd babillage; le rédacteur ne connaît évidemment pas les lieux de façon précise. Sur la valeur topographique nulle de ce récit [cf. Bonnet and Ramsay]. Une fois que j'ai fixé le site de Keretapa, la question ne se pose plus tout à fait de la même manière; l'hypothèse qu'avait d'abord envisagée M. Bonnet ... s'adapte de façon curieuse à la localisation qu'il ne soupçonnait pas; mais je ne crois pas que ce petit problème vaille la peine d'être repris. De ce Miracle on conclura seulement que Chonae et Keretapa devaient être voisines.”

10. Ramsay, *The Church in the Roman Empire*, 470–71, and see Bonnet xxviii ff.

11. Ramsay, *The Church in the Roman Empire*, 471–72, offers three possibilities for the writing of this legend. First, “Some are mere inventions to explain a name. In this way a tale might be made to explain the name Khonai, ‘funnels,’ as derived from a channel or funnel through which a neighbouring river flows.” Second, “In many cases old legends, told originally of some pagan deity, were transferred to a Christian saint.” Third, “Some legends were founded on historical facts, which occurred in Christian times.” Ramsay favors the last and cites ancient authors on his behalf. Herodotus described Colossae as a place “wherein the

Regardless of the possible historicity of events giving rise to the cult, the anonymous account of the miracle is clearly dependent upon an amount of artifice for its persuasive power.¹² Its purpose is to provide the Archangel with a comprehensive history, an apostolic initiation, and an open ending; in this view, the text is notably successful. The tale takes place in a plausible geography—despite the apparent inconsistencies—which in the course of the story is miraculously altered to a form more or less familiar to contemporaries. At the end of the miracle story, the rivers ran their proper course, the places had the right names, the crevices spewed their healing water—in other words, the actions of the Archangel completely transformed and purified the area (in the text's terms). The text, then, is not a failed document of unlikely aetiology but rather a reinforcement of the object of Michael's cult, which was to make the angel apprehensible and grounded in a specific place from which his bodiless might emanates. Michael assumes, therefore, a “power base” for his cult.¹³

river Lycus plunges into a cleft in the earth out of sight, till it appears again about five furlongs away and issues like the other river into the Maeander” (7.30; trans. A. D. Godley, 7 vols. [London, 1922] III:345). Pliny wrote in the *Natural History*, “At Colossae is a river, and bricks when cast into it are of stone when taken out” (31.20; trans. W. H. S. Jones, 10 vols. [London, 1963] VIII:395).

And Bonnet xxvi, says that this hagiography is not only a fable (of which this is an example “luculentissimum”) but also an “οιτιολογικόν.” It is not just for admiration and exhortation, “sed ab uno aliquo homine excogitari, qui, cum ad miraculum aliquod mens conversa sit et causae cognoscendae studio capta, non rem ipsam qualem oculis adsperxit et animo exornavit verbis splendidis exprimit, sed quod quaerendo et ratiocinando de rei cause effecisse sibi videtur quasi memoriae proditum et certum exploratumque credulis auditoribus proponit.”

12. Evelyne Patlagean warned against those who use a literal approach, seen to some extent in Ramsay's approach to the hagiography, and who see hagiographies “as a mere stringing together, with some variations in their order, of a limited number of legendary themes, among which the authors, who were both stupid and truthful, had inserted certain facts which were the only elements worthy of attention.” Using this method exclusively, she adds, “substitutes for the dynamic coherence of a living work a fictive chimera in which cock-and-bull stories and reliable observations are inexplicably interwoven.” See E. Patlagean, “Ancient Byzantine Hagiography and Social History,” in *Saints and Their Cults. Studies in Religion, Sociology, Folklore, and History*, ed. S. Wilson, trans. J. Hodgkin (Cambridge, 1983) 101 [= “Ancien hagiographie byzantine et histoire sociale,” *Annales* 23(1968):106–26, and *Structure sociale, famille, chrétienté à Byzance, IXe-Xle siècle* (London, 1981) item V].

13. See Mango, *Byzantium*, 157.

Localizing the immaterial Archangel was a goal of cult practice, a strategy reflected in the texts of the miracle in several ways. For instance, the miracle takes place at Colossae or Chairetopa, but miracle stories inevitably describe the change of the name of the site. In the so-called Menologium of Basil II (late tenth / early eleventh century), a compilation of brief saints' lives according to the liturgical calendar, the tale begins in a deceptively colorless manner. The narrator says, "in a town called Chonae, once Colossae ..." and he then proceeds to explain how this name change took place.¹⁴ Michael appears to his hermit and creates a cleft in the rock into which the water flows, more miraculously than before. The final sentence is, "Thereafter the place was called Chonae." This text is a condensed version of the transformational capabilities of the Archangel, in this case for landscape. The two topographical markers, the setting stated at the outset which signals a change and the final sentence which signals the reason for the change, are parentheses within which Michael's safeguarding of shrine and hermit take place. These markers, furthermore, give the narrative a sense of coherence and, importantly for a healing shrine, continuity.

In the texts, furthermore, the sense of place is also determined at a more fundamental level than narrative. The semantic play on "chone" (funnel) and its verbal form "choneuo" plant Michael's action firmly in the landscape from the moment of his intervention and into the future.¹⁵ The anonymous redactor has Michael commanding the water into its course at the height of the drama, "Fling

14. *Menologium Basilianum*, PG 117:33CD: "In a town called Chonae, once Colossae, there was a man by the name of Archippos, prudent and God fearing. He settled at the spring, which gushed forth on account of the guardianship of the Archistrategos, and because of the many miracles, and conversions and baptisms which occurred at the spring, Archippos provoked the jealousy of the Hellenes, who could not bear to see the wonderful miracles. Gnashing their teeth over the venerable agiasma and over Archippos they gathered a great many sympathisers, and damned two rivers, and mixing them together, unleashed them directly to overturn the church, agasma and Archippos. As Archippos heard the roaring of the waters, he called on the Archistrategos to help. And straightaway he appeared and struck the rock with his staff which he held and he funneled the water into the opening. Thereafter the place was called Chonae."

15. See H.G. Liddell and R. Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford, 1968) s.v. χοανεύω, iv [= χονεύω].

yourself into this funnel, and be funnelled into this chasm, and the splendour of this holy place will be throughout . . .” (19.5–7). In the version of the miracle written by Symeon Metaphrastes, Michael, before striking the rock, says to the water, “Funnel yourself into the funnel” (27.24). In the Menologium text, Michael in the penultimate sentence “funnels the water,” and in the last the narrator tells us that the place was henceforth called “funnels” or Chonae.

This play is common, in some form, to all versions of the miracle. The pun binds Michael’s act precisely to exact properties of the site, in a region known for its uncertain geology, with fissures and hidden sources, now controlled and marked by Michael, as well as signifying an exact quality of the site as a place made salutary and benign by the extraordinary act of the Archangel.¹⁶ The nature of the act appears to create the name of the site, that is, Michael creates funnels and the place is henceforth known as “funnels.” However, the miracle story’s pseudo-etymology of “funnels,” in linguistic terms, is “retro-motivated.”¹⁷ The process of “retro-motivation” implies a paradoxical inversion since the name, here Chonae, determines the character of the event. The place, given new significance in the text, in fact limits Michael’s own movements. The paradoxical operation

16. For E. Gothein, “L’arcangelo Michele, santo popolare dei Longobardi,” *Rassegna Pugliese di scienze, lettere ed arte* 13(1896):108–109, the chasm created in the hagiography is the reason for the entire cult. It was the work of a demigod, and the impression “che qui si tratti di un culto naturale, è prodotta anche da tutto il resto: dalla sacra fonte e dalla figura fiammeggiante dell’angelo. È un fatto caratteristico, che solo la trasformazione ecclesiastica posteriore delle leggende, la quale va sotto il nome di Metafrasto, gli faccia sedare e respinger l’onde furiose col segno della croce. . . . Appunto la potenza personale dell’angelo e la trasformazione arbitraria della natura, per la qual cosa egli, più che qualunque santo umano, avvicinavasi alla natura divina, costituiva l’attrattiva per la fantasia popolare.”

Similarly, F. W. Hasluck, *Letters on Religion and Folklore* (London, 1926) 85ff., stated that Michael’s connection with Chonae was with the chasm and not the spring. He saw Michael’s role as primarily a “devil-dompter” at the mouth of hell; as the opponent of the devil, Michael took care of healings and madness.

17. P. Guiraud, “Étymologie et ethymologia (Motivation et rétromotivation),” *Poétique* 11(1972):408: “Mais dans tous les exemples ici en cause le nom reprend ses droits et c’est lui qui motive le statut sémiologique du signifié: la forme crée le fond, le mot engendre la chose, par un procédé que l’on pourrait appeler ‘rétro-motivation.’” And also, N. Strüver, “Fables of Power,” *Representations* 4(1983):112: “In retro-motivation, names create situations, narratives generate structures, words engender things . . . the newly endowed word is then used as a proof of phenomenal character or event. . . .”

both situates him and deprives him of initiative at the heart of his own act. Moreover, the predetermined quality of Michael's act is typologically reinforced by a parallel overtly made to Moses's miracle at Horeb (Ex. 17:6). This retro-motivation and typology indicate the inherent difficulties of describing an indescribable being and the processes by which he made his presence known.

Michael's imprint on the material world, here the physical realignment of his shrine and renewal of the miraculous qualities of the inexhaustible spring, is the only possible relic for a bodiless angel. The relic of an angel can only be negative, as the common epithets of the angels, bodiless ($\alpha\sigma\omega\mu\alpha\tau\circ\varsigma$) or immaterial ($\alpha\bar{u}\lambda\circ\varsigma$), are only negative attributes. At Chonae, the relic is not additive since nothing is left behind; Michael alters the landscape and in that way leaves traces of his immaterial presence. In the face of the natural uncertainties surrounding the Archangel, this alteration is the only positive proof possible. Moreover, the text promotes a place where regular exchange with the incomprehensible Archangel is possible and where a balance of prayer and reward is effected.¹⁸ Cult binds Michael to the site as the retro-motivated act embeds him within the very topography.

This structure of transformation and imprint is common to miracle stories concerning the Archangel Michael and is often an attribute of Michael's successful sanctuaries. For this reason, an examination of other miracle shrines and their texts situates this structure further in the cult of the Archangel Michael. The shrine of the Archangel Michael on Monte Gargano in Apulia in southern Italy has long been recognized as a descendant of the cult of Michael at Chonae.¹⁹ The miracle story of Michael at Gargano dates in its pres-

18. J. Walter, "St Demetrius: The Myroblytos of Thessalonika," *Eastern Churches Review* 5(1973):158 [= C. Walter, *Studies in Byzantine Iconography* (London, 1977) item V], notes the difficulties in dislodging Demetrius from his shrine at Thessalonike, and ventures that, paradoxically, this may have arisen from the fact that Demetrius was not there. The cult relied on proofs deriving from the *ex voto* images set up in his church. In contrast, Michael's cult relied on different kinds of material proofs commensurate with his formless nature.

19. See Gothein, "L'arcangelo Michele, santo popolare dei Longobardi," 111ff.; W.v. Rintelen, *Kultgeographische Studien in der Italia Byzantina. Untersuchungen über die Kultur des Erzengels Michael und der Madonna di Constantinopoli in Südalien* (Meisenheim am Glan, 1968) 3ff.; idem, "Kult- und Legendenwanderung von Ost nach West in frühen Mittelalter," *Saeculum* 22(1971):98; G. Otranto, "Il 'Liber de apparitione,' il santuario di San Michele sul

ent form to the eighth or ninth century,²⁰ and a Greek version was written in the late ninth or early tenth century, a time of the Byzantine re-conquest of the region.²¹

The Monte Gargano miracle story comprises three distinct, and rather disjointed, sections. At the beginning of the tale, a bull strayed from the herd of a wealthy local landowner, Garganus, on the slopes of the mountain. Garganus set out in search of the animal himself and eventually found the bull in a cave. The hot-headed squire, Garganus, became incensed at the animal and fired an arrow at it, but this arrow inexplicably returned “as if breathed upon by wind,” and struck the sender instead.²² Garganus returned to town and told his story to the locals, who were astounded by the incident. When canvassed, the bishop undertook a fast of three days and nights to discover the hidden cause. On the third night, a vision of the Archangel Michael visited the bishop, and it told the bishop that Michael had returned the arrow. At this Michael identified himself,²³ and said that the reason for his intervention was that he wished “to dwell in this place on earth and guard all.” Going to the mountainside the next day the bishop and townsfolk found that two doors were cut into the face of the mountain.

In the next episode, Michael appeared in another dream of the bishop and predicted the victory of the Sipontini, and their allies the Beneventi, over their enemies, the “heathen” Neapolitans. The next

Gargano e i Longobardi del Ducato di Benevento,” in *Santuari e politica nel mondo antico*, ed. M. Sordi (Milan, 1983) 24ff.

20. G. Otranto, “Il ‘Liber de apparitione’ e il culto di San Michele sul Gargano nella documentazione liturgica altomedievale,” *VetChr* 18(1981):44off.

21. This text was first reported by A. Petrucci, *Una versione greco-bizantina dell’Apparitione Sancti Michaelis in Monte Gargano* (Rome, 1955) and has been subsequently edited by Sandro Leanza. See also G. Otranto, “Per una metodologia della ricerca storico-agiografica: Il Santuario micalizio del Gargano tra Bizantini e Longobardi,” *VetChr* 25(1988):40off.

22. Leanza 301.38–39, *AASS* Sept. 8:61C, and *MGH* 541.28–31. Otranto, “Il ‘Liber de apparitione,’” 217ff., sees a trace of the defeat of paganism in this episode, a kind of battle between Garganus, a local god perhaps, and the new occupant, Michael. Although it is true that Garganus is not called *vir* in the texts, neither is paganism mentioned; in the text’s terms, Michael’s redirection of the arrow is a sign of presence and also nomination.

23. Leanza 315, on ll.48–49, where terms very close to Matt. 2:13 are used, and the Greek text simply substitutes “ἀρχάγγελος” for “ἄγγελος,” and “ἀγιωτάτῳ ἐπισκόπῳ” for “Ιωσηφ.”

day strange things happened on the mountain, amongst them rumblings like thunder, lightning and darkness.²⁴ The “pagan” enemies were frightened off by these inexplicable signs and the Sipontini enjoyed an “angelic victory.”²⁵ Ascending to the site of the doors, the locals entered the cave and found traces there of the Archangel’s presence—“a small trace, as if the footstep of a man, struck there in the marble.”²⁶ By means of the signs of his tracings, this church was called the “place of the footprints.”²⁷

After the third visitation of the Archangel, the shrine was completed. The bishop, wondering about the proper way to consecrate this unparalleled chapel, had another vision, and the Archangel himself told the bishop not to consecrate the church because, “I myself have put it in order and consecrated it. You need only come and approach with your entreaties since I am attending as master in that place.”²⁸ Michael told him to come the next day and he would at that time show them how that place would guide them. The bishop visited the next day and found at the same spot a chapel ready made, carved out of the living rock “as if by the hands of the Archangel” (fig. 18). The chapel was clearly not produced by human hands, the narrator remarks, because the chapel was so irregular and rough, so full of corners and angles, that only an Archangel could have manufactured it.²⁹ They also found there a red cloak covering the altar—recollecting Elijah’s abandoned mantle (2 Kings 2:13)—and a spring erupted nearby which became a famous healing source.³⁰

The structural similarities, in the means by which the immaterial Archangel is grounded and made more really present, are striking in

24. Leanza 303.83ff. and 315–16; *AASS* Sept. 8:61D.

25. Leanza 302.81–303.2.

26. *AASS* Sept. 8:61E; *MGH* 542.23–24, and Leanza 303.98ff.

27. Leanza 303.105–304.107. In Greek, the allusion to the imprint of the feet is more obvious since *Apodonia* is clearly a loan word within the Latin text. See Leanza 313.

28. Leanza 305.139–42. Compare *MGH* 542.39–543.3.

29. Leanza 306.156ff.; *AASS* Sept. 8:62AB; *MGH* 543.4–14.

30. Leanza 307.182–83, which recalls Matthew 4:24 (“And his fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatick, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them”); *AASS* Sept. 8:62BC; *MGH* 543.19ff.

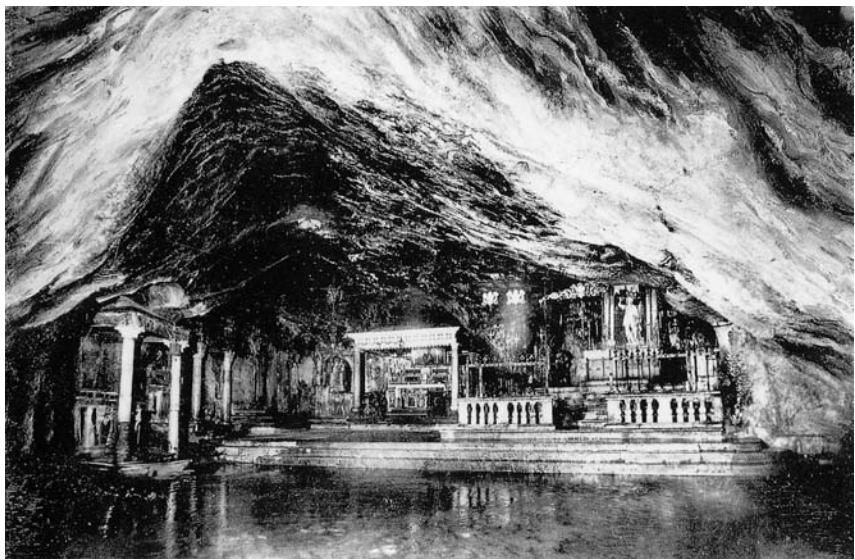


Figure 18. Sanctuary of the Archangel Michael at Mt. Gargano, Apulia, Italy.
Photo: Biblioteca Communale, Città di Monte Sant'Angelo.

the cases of Chonae and Gargano.³¹ In the Gargano miracle story, the first appearance of the Archangel brings about a renaming of the mountain, for now, “ex eventu,”³² the mountain is named after the wealthy Garganus. As at Chonae, Michael works at this nominative level and also transforms the holy site in a manner that specifically signals archangelic agency. The gradual construction of the chapel and his own heavenly consecration confirm Michael’s voluntary presence. The impression of Michael’s “body” is, furthermore, a dynamic relic, reductive and yet stamped at the focus of cult, the altar, a sign of immanence contained.³³ Footprints are an ancient sign of pres-

31. Rintelen, *Kultgeographische Studien*, 15.

32. AASS Sept. 8:60B. The identity of the figure of Garganus has been the source of much speculation. Most authors see Garganus as a remnant of some uncertain pagan deity Michael supplants. See, for an overview, Otranto, “Il ‘Liber de apparitione,’” 213ff., and especially 220ff., on the interesting parallels of the episode with Barlaam and the ass (Numbers 22:22ff.).

33. Footprints are common signs of presence in Greco-Roman sanctuaries throughout the Mediterranean, either of the divinity or of the worshipper (ambivalence is built into

ence, and at Gargano the assurance is essential for an incorporeal being who has chosen a place on earth for his “fleeting abode.”³⁴ Furthermore, the inscription over the door of the church at Gargano reinforces the notion of the spot hallowed by contact with Michael by recalling Exodus 3:5, where Moses is ordered to take off his shoes on account of the holy ground.³⁵

As at Chonae, a moral directive functions in the miracle story that describes the behavior proper to receiving revelation and epiphany of angels. God has sent Michael, the Greek miracle story of Gargano states, as guardian for those who were worthy.³⁶ Inevitably the text presents a moral program for devotees to follow in order to be considered deserving. When Garganus descended with his mysteriously inflicted wound, he naturally appealed to the bishop.³⁷ The bishop then fasted in order to learn the cause, since, as in the case of Archippus, the rules for this kind of appeal were well established in scripture and in other texts. After the bishop had completed the fast, the Archangel visited the bishop in a dream, and he said, “let it be known to you that it occurred because I willed it. For I am the Arch-

these signs). On this, see K. M. D. Dunbabin, “‘Ipsa deae vestigiae . . .’ Footprints Divine and Human on Graeco-Roman Monuments,” *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 3(1990): 85–109. Christianity absorbed this feature of pagan religions by the fourth century, at least, as the shrine on the Mount of Olives built for the footprints of Christ shows. See B. Köting, “Fußspuren als Zeichen göttlicher Anwesenheit,” *Boreas* 6(1983):200–201.

For angels the sign of footsteps has a different meaning. The footsteps describe a fleeting presence made imminent and concrete. For instance, at Santa Maria in Aracoeli, Rome, the marble footsteps of the angel who appeared to Gregory the Great are kept. See M. M. Guarducci, “Le impronte del ‘Quo vadis’ e monumenti affini, figurati ed epigrafici,” *Rendiconti. Pontificia Accademia Romana di Archeologia* 19(1942 / 4):315; and B. Pesci, “Il problema cronologico della Madonna di Aracoeli alla luce delle fonti,” *RivAC* 18(1941):53ff. In the case of the angels, footprints serve to give form to formless beings; they are simple, visible signs of past manifestation and constant presence.

34. Gothein, “L’arcangelo Michele,” 142; and see C. Angelillis, *Il santuario del Gargano e il culto di S. Michele nel mondo*, 2 vols. (Foggia, 1956) I:231.

35. Angelillis, *Il santuario del Gargano*, I:47.

36. Leanza 300.9–10. At 311, he also remarks on the same effacement of ancient heresy found in the Chonae hagiographies. In the Latin text Michael is moved in favor of the Sipontini because of his compassion for human frailty, while in the Greek text it is God who has compassion for human fragility and this in turn moves Michael on the behalf of the Sipontini. Leanza plausibly suggests the modification is due to theological preoccupations with making Michael’s intervention subservient to God’s will.

37. Leanza 301.39ff.

angel Michael, he who always stands in the presence of God.”³⁸ The bishop fasted a second time, “so as to be worthy of Michael’s aid and presence,”³⁹ and had a second vision. Michael’s appearances and construction henceforth miraculously transformed the site, and the access given to the bishop was opened, in lesser degrees, to all those far and wide who were worthy.⁴⁰

Important for devotional ends, however, was the emphasis on presence. The prologue to the Greek text specifies the “digging” and manufacture of the cave-church as an incontrovertible sign of the Archangel’s visitation and presence. The miracle story remarks on the very roughness and oddity of the construction as a mark of the benevolence and heartfelt solicitation of devotion. Michael’s presence infuses every corner and crevice of the chapel because of the superhuman technique of construction, as Michael’s extraordinary act of intervention at Chonae impressed his presence on the spring and chasm. Since Gargano was the radiating point for the cult of Michael for the West, other shrines in Italy and the rest of Europe consistently imitated the idiosyncratic invention and shape of the church.⁴¹ The foundation of the monastery at Mt. Tumba in Normandy self-consciously modeled itself after the Gargano sanctuary, down to the importation of monks and a piece of the altar stone as a relic from Gargano.⁴² In western Europe roughly designed churches

38. Leanza 301.47ff.

39. Leanza 302.66ff.

40. Leanza 307.188.

41. Gothein, “L’arcangelo Michele,” 141: “questa sua miracolosa abitazione terrena lo fece apparir sempre come una specie di divinità naturale”; and in time, Gothein says, the irregularity and the roughness of the shrine became “un simbolo prediletto dall’arcangelo.” He adds that the candles which burn during the day in the grotto are allowed to snuff out at dusk because it is then that the archangel is believed to enter his sanctuary. And see G. Otranto and C. Carletti, *Il santuario di S. Michele arcangelo sul Gargano dalle origine al X secolo* (Bari, 1990) 57–71, and O. Campagna, “La grotta di S. Michele alla Serra di Grisolia,” *Bulletino della Badia Greca di Grottaferrata* n.s. 40(1986):57–65, on the typology of Michael’s cave sanctuaries.

42. The similarities between Tumba and Gargano are striking and indeed entirely purposeful. Michael makes his will known through signs and visions and more importantly in his reshaping of the holy sanctuary. See *AASS* Sept. 8:75E, 77C, and *Millénaire monastique du Mont-St.-Michel*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1971).

placed on mountain tops became a symbol of the Archangel's presence.⁴³

These palpable signs are momentous within the cult of Michael since, as the narrator of the Greek miracle story states, "order is made through signs and heavenly power."⁴⁴ These signs are more apprehensible when made materially and dramatically. The first incident on Gargano was really a signal of Michael's intent; the returned arrow is noteworthy in the miracle story because of its ambiguity and fleeting quality. Further, the dreams of the bishop are transitory visions in the murky realms of the unconscious, and they are restricted to one person. The irrefutable physical impressions made by the Archangel inspired the collective imagination and other sanctuaries reproduced them. The miracle story presents these marks of voluntary presence as ways in which they bridle Michael so that material signs mediate his immaterial being and make him comprehensible.⁴⁵

Psellus's eleventh-century narrative praising the Archangel Michael provides an important contrast to the stories of the miracles at Chonae and Gargano and their cult certainties. The precise location of the shrine described by Psellus is not known, since he presented little topographical detail, but it may well have been in Galatia in Asia Minor, perhaps in the city of Sykeon.⁴⁶ In the prologue, Psellus extolled the Archangel's splendid qualities. Michael surpasses in mea-

43. See T. Baumeister, "Religionsgeschichtliche und kultgeographische Aspekte der westlichen Michaelsverehrung," in *Memoriam sanctorum venerantes: miscellanea in onore di Monsignor Victor Sacher*, Studi di antichità cristiana, vol. 48 (Vatican City, 1992) 11–19.

44. Lanza 300.5–7.

45. Michael's immanent protection was held to be magically ensured by means of images and names in some popular legends. See, for example, E. Amélineau, *Contes et romans de l'Egypte chrétienne* (Paris, 1888) 41, on the Coptic legend of Euphemia. In the legend, Satan says to Michael, "O Monseigneur l'archange, aie pitié de moi; j'ai eu l'audace de commettre la faute d'entrer dans une chambre où se trouvaient ton nom et ton image: je t'en supplie, ne me fais pas périr avant que le terme de mon existence soit arrivé.... Je vais te promettre devant Dieu de ne plus entrer dans un endroit où sera ton nom."

46. On the topography, see Fisher, "Nicomedia or Galatia?" 170ff.; Mango, "La croix dite le Cerulaire," 48; V. Ruggieri, *Byzantine Religious Architecture (582–867): Its History and Structural Elements*, Orientalia christiana analecta, vol. 237 (Rome, 1991) 242ff., on the village of Sykeon in Galatia, but especially 249; R. Volk, *Der medizinische Inhalt der Schriften des Michael Psellos* (Munich, 1990) 196ff.

sure and magnitude the nature and deeds of humanity. One must “announce the great things of the nature over us” and proclaim the miracles of the Archangel even more than those of the human saints.

Psellus then proceeded to narrate the events that led up to the foundation of the church of Michael. Heraclius (ca. 575–641) was in the course of returning to Constantinople after a triumphant campaign against the Persians in the Holy Land.⁴⁷ His victories were aided in no small part by a miraculous cross, which had powers against unseen hateful ones and all other battling powers. The emperor had decided to rest on this return journey in the vicinity of a church dedicated to the Theotokos, and he deposited the cross on the altar of that church for the duration of the stay. When it was time to recommence the journey, Heraclius sent some soldiers to collect the cross at the church. However, the cross refused to be moved and could not be dislodged from the altar no matter what effort was applied to it, “just as some rocky outcrop is unshaken by waves falling upon it.”⁴⁸ Almost immediately the soldiers were distracted by a second and more wondrous miracle when the cross kindled into strange flame.

The sparks of an unseen fire shone forth at first. Thereupon, the cross caught fire entirely. And the kindling increased a little, and with a little help it, having been brought altogether to a head, also spread through the whole building and around the church. And now [the fire] was thrown from the building and it seemed that the whole thing was about to be burned.... But the fire was consumed in the same way as the ancient bush. Whence it burned, it did not consume the church, but rather the church burning to ashes was beaming with light. And in the same way that it had been attacked invisibly, in this same way it was again extinguished with the flames quenched, and the church showed forth as before, only more pure than it had been. But at least I do not suppose that this was a somatic fire, though it had been seen and considered by many in this way, but the divine Archangel decided to appear out of immaterial-

47. Fisher, *Michaelis Pselli Orationes Hagiographicae*, 233.50ff.

48. Fisher, *Michaelis Pselli Orationes Hagiographicae*, 238.158ff.

ity possessing a being of fire, in the church of the Mother of God, since the intelligible lightning of burning heat was being made manifest to the onlookers as sensual burning heat.⁴⁹

When the emperor heard of this miracle, he was greatly moved and he commissioned churches for the Archangel and the Mother of God as well as providing monks for the foundation, thereby “making an angelic order on earth for the Archangel.”⁵⁰ And Psellus concluded by saying that the former flame still burns in the hearts of those practicing there and the Archangel oversees them still.

This is a remarkable miracle not least because of the inscrutability of the cause. Psellus did not declare Michael’s agency except by the nature of the miracle, which itself has congruity with Michael’s own nature. Michael’s fiery and spiritual constitution seems to have been the only possible means by which such a paradoxical miracle could have been accomplished. Psellus, moreover, could not state the reason for Michael’s intervention in a church of the Theotokos through an object which he himself said is inextricably linked to Christ. Psellus offered two possibilities: “Either he wanted to take up residence in this sacred church and to perform miracles there, or honouring the image of the Virgin, he desired to serve under the personal command of the queen there.”⁵¹ Psellus confessed he did not know for certain. He continued his miracle story with descriptions of some of the miracles that followed on this miraculous enunciation of intent by the Archangel. Michael brings about cures and miracles in a number of ways, either through the agency of the cross, or by a person’s simply being in the church or taking sacraments. By these means, Michael shows his “great power” and his “overshadowing presence.”⁵² The inscrutability of Michael’s presence is noteworthy when

49. Fisher, *Michaelis Pselli Orationes Hagiographicae*, 238.179–239.192. The icon that is not consumed by fire also has a history. See O. Meinardus, “A Typological Analysis of the Traditions Pertaining to Miraculous Icons,” in *Wegzeichen. Festgabe zum 60. Geburtstag von Prof. Dr. Hermangild M. Lieberman OSA*, ed. E. C. Suttner and C. Patock (Würzburg, 1971) 220–21.

50. Fisher, *Michaelis Pselli Orationes Hagiographicae*, 239.203ff.

51. Fisher, *Michaelis Pselli Orationes Hagiographicae*, 239.198–201.

52. Fisher, *Michaelis Pselli Orationes Hagiographicae*, 247.404–406.

compared to the direct, unmistakable traces left at Chonae and Gargano. And yet the cross contained and channeled Michael's presence through the cross there. This object is in some sense a conduit for Michael's activity "by which and in which the great Archistrategos works miracles."⁵³ Michael's immanence has thereby found some kind of cast.

These miracle stories all display the extraordinary means necessary for the foundation of cult shrines of the bodiless Archangel. These special strategies are even more evident when contrasted to miracle stories of the mortal saints. For example, in the ninth century, Nicephorus, a priest at the church of the Virgin in Blachernai at Constantinople, wrote an encomium in honor of Theodore of Sykeon (d.613) in which he described the procession of the body of Theodore from his home province of Galatia to Constantinople. A miracle which has striking similarities to Michael's initial miracle described by Psellus occurred in the course of that procession.⁵⁴ Theodore of Sykeon's bier halted of its own accord outside the walls of the capital and could not be moved. A second miracle followed this first as one of the team of animals drawing the cart spoke in order to make the saint's will known. Reminiscent of Balaam's ass (Numbers 22:22ff.), the animal said that the saint wished to reside in this place and work wonders there.⁵⁵ The immovable object followed by a more fantastic miracle constitutes a striking similarity between the miracles of Theodore of Sykeon and Michael.⁵⁶

53. Fisher, *Michaelis Pselli Orationes Hagiographicae*, 244.319ff.

54. K. Kirch, "Nicephori Sceuophylacis encomium in S. Theodorum Siceotam," *AB* 20(1901):269.22–32.

55. Similar foundation legends are noted by G. Dagron, "Constantinople. Les sanctuaires et l'organisation de la ville religieuse," *Actes du XIe congrès international d'archéologie chrétienne. Lyons, Vienne, Grenoble, Genève et Aoste (21–28 Septembre 1986)*, 3 vols. (Vatican City, 1989) II:1072–73.

56. Fisher, "Nicomedia or Galatia?" 182. She sees several elements in common between the two hagiographies: first, a sudden and persistent immovability and, second, a greater miracle which serves to confirm the first. Moreover, Fisher posits the dependence of the hagiography of Psellus on that of Theodore of Sykeon on account of local competitiveness between the two local cults. She also sees significance, in both instances, of an offering of an explanation for the incidents, even though Psellus's interpretation is notably vague. Michael is connected to the phenomenon at the church because of its elemental force, the natural association of Michael with fire. Fisher also sees "imagery of flashing light associated with the

Important, however, are the differences which do show the particular character of Michael's cult. In the narrative of Psellus, Michael works through the cross. By contrast, Theodore of Sykeon continued to operate after his death through his corporeal relics, thus making his presence known on earth thereafter. In fact, relics are key in the cult of most mortal saints and serve to distinguish them from the cult activity of the Archangel.⁵⁷ Moreover, as the sermon of Severus of Antioch (ca. 465–538) shows, the church often introduced relics of mortal saints into shrines of angels in order to make the cult of angels palatable to authorities.⁵⁸

With or without a relic, Michael's presence at the church Psellus described is simply inexplicable and unpredictable, but undeniably there. The ambiguity of Michael's appearance is also noteworthy in comparison to the unmistakable communication of Theodore of Sykeon's will concerning his earthly remains. Michael's will, on the other hand, asserts itself through a kind of immanence and an effect on the shrine that purifies through invisible contact with the Archangel. Michael has left traces on the site in that he has perceptibly altered the church, and the subsequent thaumaturgic character of the shrine proves this alteration.

holy one," although I do not see this figuring in the Theodore text in the same way. What seems more important, then, are the factors not shared, notably relics, an unambiguous revelation of will and the incomprehensible angelic manifestation. On the textual level, moreover, one can make an equally strong case for scriptural precedents as providing clearer paradigms for the Psellus hagiography.

57. M. Rouche, "Le combat des saintes anges et des démons: La victoire de Saint Michel," *Santi e demoni nell'alto medioevo occidentale (secoli v–xi)*, Settimane vol. 36, 2 vols. (Spoleto, 1989) I:534.

58. See chapter 2 for the sermon, but see also the Council of Carthage (ca. 400?) which ruled that churches and shrines of the saints themselves must not be founded without relics. The Fathers of this Council decided against the custom of establishing shrines by the faithful who invoke some apparition of saints or of the martyrs in dreams or revelations. See G. A. Ralles and M. Potles, *Σύνταγμα τῶν θείων καὶ ἵερῶν κανόνων*, 6 vols. (Athens, 1852–1859) III:508ff. On relics and angels, see P. Canivet, "Le *Michaelion* de Huarte (Ve s.) et le culte syrien des anges," *B* 50(1980):10ff.; P. and M. T. Canivet, *Huarte. Sanctuaire chrétien d'Apaméne (IVe-VIe s.)*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1987) I:279ff.; Severus of Antioch (ca. 465–538), *Les homiliae cathedrales*, PO vol. 8/2, ed. M. Brière (Paris, 1919; rp. Turnhout, 1971) 84ff.; and P. Maraval, *Lieux saints et pèlerinages d'Orient. Histoire et géographie des origines à la conquête arabe* (Paris, 1985) 56. And see *Vie de Théodore de Sykéon*, ed. A.-J. Festugière, 2 vols. (Brussels, 1970) I:36 (40.10ff.), 57 (70.1ff.), 80 (100.1ff.), 82–83 (103.1ff.), 140 (161.51ff.), on the association of St. George and Michael in Galatia.

Another telling comparison can be made to the “life” and cult of Thecla.⁵⁹ The saint, according to her miracle story, appears in dreams and in other ways beyond her shrine at Seleucia in southeastern Asia Minor. The “life” states that the shrine is located on the site of her descent into the living rock. According to the “life,” God opened the rock in order to engulf her, saying,

“Do not fear … behold how it has opened up before you, for there shall be your eternal dwelling place, and there you shall receive shelter.” And … Thecla beheld the rock opening up, as much as made room for a person to enter … and she entered the rock. And the rock closed straightaway....⁶⁰

The legend is clearly charged with explaining the lack of actual relics or known grave site. The rock simply split at the altar and all suffering and illness were dispelled at that spot. Gilbert Dagron saw this as an alternate tradition that arose locally in Seleucia, orally perhaps, in order to compensate for the absence of relics.⁶¹ For the locals, he proposed, Thecla continued to inhabit the place, eternally resting and alive, like Enoch. Indeed, Severus of Antioch wrote in his homily on Thecla that the saint’s body was entrusted to the earth whence her miracles and healings continue.⁶²

The relics of Cyrus and John, on the other hand, are witness to the authenticity of the cult, at Menuthis near Alexandria.⁶³ The relics had been found by Cyril of Alexandria (378–444),⁶⁴ though they were previously unknown, and brought to the sanctuary at Menuthis. The author of the “life,” Sophronius (ca. 560–638), would brook no doubt on the subject of the relics’ worth and veracity. In one of the miracles, a woman called Athanasia from Alexandria re-

59. L. Deubner, *De incubatione capita quattuor* (Leipzig, 1900) 98ff.

60. Deubner, *De incubatione*, 102.

61. *Vie et miracles de sainte Thècle. Texte grec, traduction et commentaire*, ed. G. Dagron (Brussels, 1978) 50ff.

62. *Les homiliae cathedrales*, 136–37.

63. Maraval, *Lieux saints et pèlerinages d’Orient*, 384ff.

64. *Homilia xviii. Fragmenta de translatione reliquiarum martyrum Cyri et Joannis*, PG 77:1100C ff.

fused the title of martyr to Cyrus and John because no documents existed to satisfy her concerning the saints' deeds and the provenance of their relics.⁶⁵ Sophronius observed that many martyrs do not have documentation for their relics and that devotees piously venerated them for their qualities as intercessors. He further claimed that Cyril of Alexandria's texts are documentation enough for the relics' authenticity. Even without this indisputable fact, he continued, the martyrs' *bona fides* is the number of miracles, which exceeds those of certain other martyrs. Athanasia was willfully deaf to any argument and was struck by paralysis as punishment; only with her repentance was the affliction lifted. With mortal saints, the traces of activity constituted a partial proof of their existence; and yet the infallible proof was their relics.

In contrast to the mortal saints, the bodiless Archangel, who has no earthly existence, is made known by imprints and transformations of the perceptible world; remnants of a physical, mundane past are not possible. The relative stability of the effects, and the wonders deriving from them, is a necessary counterbalance to the essentially incomprehensible nature of the cause, the Archangel Michael. The invisible movements and inscrutable purposes of the angels are sometimes manifest, however, and in a way recognizable and approachable even to humanity. Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite described the invisible, intellectual life of the angels using the metaphor of the lion who walks towards the sun without leaving any trace.⁶⁶ In this manner, the angels themselves imitate divine discretion in dissimulating the traces of their intelligence. The angels are permitted a divine illumination in enveloping mysteriously and without arrogance this ascension towards the Thearchy. The intellectual nature of the angels' activities necessitates that unmistakable tracks be left behind to signal the protective presence of Michael, or any other angel, for cult. The abstract and recondite nature of the theology of Pseudo-Dionysius could not have satisfied any desire for

65. *Homilia xviii, XXIX*, PG 87.3:3508A–13C.

66. Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, *La Hiérarchie Céleste*, SC vol. 58, ed. G. Heil and M. de Gandillac (Paris, 1958) 185 nr.

devotional certainties. Just the same, these passages on the intellectual life of the angels describe the remoteness and incomprehensibility of the angelic host. This theological conception, then, is the counterpoint to the miracle stories' descriptions of Michael's effect on place. The continuing guardianship manifest in Michael's traces, and underlined in the miracle stories, maintain his immanence in the wake of his difficult epiphany.

The Archangel's own promise of intent in the accounts of the Chonae miracle underlines the importance of place in his cult. At the climax of the miracle story, with the water standing before them to the height of ten persons, Michael struck the impenetrable rock, which resounded throughout the land like thunder. Michael then made his vow (18.8–12): "In this very place will be crushed all suffering and every evil and illness and enchantment and poison and all workings of wickedness. Here all fetters will be loosened and the troubled and the feeble will be healed."

At Gargano also Michael made explicit the motive behind his appearances. He appeared to Garganus and to the bishop, and constructed the chapel, in order that he might make known his will to remain present with benevolent purpose at that site. The material traces of this difficult presence at a blessed place are the signs the cult depended upon and are the common structure of these texts and the cult the texts relate.

Pilgrimage is an extension of this basic impulse to find ongoing testimony of Michael's benevolent activity. The hope of finding deliverance is greater at places where presence is promised and proven.⁶⁷ Victor and Mary Turner have written, "All sites of pilgrimage have this in common: they are believed to be places where miracles once happened, still happen and may happen again."⁶⁸ The shrine at Chonae was the site of pilgrimage and famous festivals in honor of the saint, at least until the late twelfth century and possibly

67. V. Turner and M. Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture. Anthropological Perspectives* (New York, 1978) 6.

68. Turner / Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage*, 6.

beyond.⁶⁹ Testimony establishes that pilgrims came to Chonae for the efficacious quality of a site where the presence of the bodiless Archangel was tangible, visible and constant.⁷⁰

The difficulties of perception and comprehension of the angels, particularly of the active and popular Michael, made certain strategies desirable in cult and its textual manifestations. The enigmatic nature of the Archangel found counterbalances in the positive proofs of cult, that is, material traces of the bodiless Archangel. On a textual level, the miracle stories underscore the importance of material traces by such devices as retro-motivation and re-nomination. Pilgrims sought the Archangel's favor, and healing and other assistances were expressions of his material interventions of a benevolent character: these were the cult certainties that the devotion to an immaterial being demanded. According to the stories of the miracle at Chonae, the landscape witnessed in a crucial sense Michael's presence and still contains the effects of that intervention. In a more radical, more thoroughgoing way, the landscape is a witness, since—as will be seen in the following section—autopsy is elusive and illusory.

69. Michael Choniates (ca. 1138–ca. 1222) described the gatherings for the shrine of Michael in this way: “The miracles in the church gave rise to a festival, a multitudinous festival, about it. It is multitudinous, indeed very multitudinous, for it draws, not to exaggerate, all the neighbouring towns, but also in addition the Lydians, Carians, Paphlagonians, and Lycians from beyond, and in addition barbarian Iconiates, in order to buy and sell.” See Μιχαὴλ Ἀκομινωτοῦ τοῦ Χωνιατοῦ τὰ Σωζόμενα, ed. S. P. Lampros, 2 vols. (Athens, 1879–1880) I:56; trans. S. Vryonis, Jr., “The *Panegyris* of the Byzantine Saint: A Study in the Nature of a Medieval Institution, Its Origins and Fate,” in *The Byzantine Saint*, ed. S. Hackel (London, 1981) 216.

70. On the pilgrimage to Chonae, see S. Vryonis, Jr., *The Decline of Medieval Hellenism in Asia Minor and the Process of Islamization from the Eleventh through the Fifteenth Century*, Berkeley, 1971, 20, 33 n165, and B. Kötting, *Peregrinatio religiosa. Wallfahrten in der Antike und das Pilgerwesen in der alten Kirche* (Münster, 1950; rp. Münster, 1980) 166ff, Belke/Mersich, *Phrygien und Pisidien*, 223, and Maraval, *Lieux saints et pèlerinages d’Orient*, 385.

Pilgrims also made their way to the shrine of Michael described by Psellus. He mentions a *panegyros* held for Michael there (Fisher, *Michaelis Pselli Orationes Hagiographicae*, 246.388), and a pilgrims' hostel (Fisher, *Michaelis Pselli Orationes Hagiographicae*, 246.368–72). And for Gargano, the long and well-documented history of pilgrimage is outlined by Angelillis, *Il santuario del Gargano*, II:163–250.

By their use of metaphor and scriptural model, miracle stories reveal the distance that separates human comprehension from full knowledge of the Archangel. The disparity between this desire for a greater apprehension and the ultimate failure to describe marks the verbal impasse in reports of the Archangel and his activities. Material images also share in this impasse. They normally show a winged youth, as in the Sinai icon of the Chonae miracle (fig. 15), but such a representation is simply an allusion to a transcendent nature rather than a literal rendering of an angel's appearance. Descriptions from miracle stories examined here do not provide stable models for representing the Archangel as they can for human saints. Like images, miracle stories provide a means for apprehension that not only compels contemplation but also denies resemblance and complete discernment of the archangelic subject.

Pre-existing structures derived from scripture and other texts determine to a large extent verbal descriptions in miracle stories of angels, including the Archangel Michael. These descriptions are recognizably “borrowed” and thus venerable because of their origins. They create familiarity and persuade the audience as to the miracle story’s verity. At the same time, the unoriginal quality of the descriptions work to another purpose: descriptions of the Archangel obtained from scriptural passages reporting epiphanies indicate the impossibility of language truly rendering an Archangel or angel.

The encounter of holy man and angel at Chonae, as described in the miracle stories, is very much within the scriptural structure of divine epiphany. Furthermore, the encounter indicates the difficulties attendant upon confronting and perceiving an angelic being. Archippus had no sooner finished his Psalm than there arose a great peal of thunder outside the chapel and the Archistrategos appeared (14.16ff.). In the dialogue that ensues, Michael tries to calm the shaken monk. This structure of awful epiphany and conciliation—not to mention the preparations—has an obvious antecedent in the appearance of the “one like the similitude of the sons of men” to Daniel (Dan. 10:1ff.). Michael called out to the monk in a “great

voice” to leave the shrine before he is plunged in the water. Archippus came out very cautiously and saw a vision “glancing like lightning,” and he fell to the ground “as if dead.”⁷¹

At this moment Archippus is given a full vision of the power of his protector, and of his faith: the Archangel is a pillar of fire from earth to heaven.⁷² Exodus described the Angel of the Lord who led the Israelites out of the desert identically, “through the pillar of fire and of the cloud” (Ex. 14:24).⁷³ Moreover, Michael’s fiery nature, established by scripture, Psalm 104:4 most notably, often manifests itself in texts on epiphanies. Fire is a textual veil referring to the difficult nature and aspect established by scripture.

The Archangel thereupon told Archippus to stand firm and witness the power of God. Michael commanded the still approaching rivers to stop, and the waters stood to the height of ten persons. And then, Sissinius says, Michael acted just as Moses at the Red Sea: “For as Moses once formed walls of the waters when he struck them with his staff, and led the people to the promised land out of Egypt, why not even (greater) by the word of the Taxiarch Michael, leader of the entire host of heaven?”⁷⁴ Michael is able to stop the waters with a

71. Sissinius, *Acta apparitionis in Chonis*, 15, AASS Sept. 8:46EF, describes Michael further as a “flashing forth of angelic glory,” an implicit comparison to Moses at Exodus 34:29ff. For instance, Gregory of Nyssa (ca. 330–ca. 395), *In Canticum Canticorum homiliae xv*, PG 44:1025C, says that Moses was like the sun, with “the light flashing forth from his face.”

Archippus’s reaction is not untypical of such a dreadful epiphany: see C. Rowland, *The Open Heaven. A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity* (New York, 1982) 367.

72. The same description is found in the Metaphrastic version (Bonnet 27.8–9). Sissinius, *Acta apparitionis in Chonis*, 15, AASS Sept. 8:46E, signals the indescribable nature of the vision with ώσει στύλος πυρὸς ἀπὸ γῆς εἰς οὐρανὸν standing on the hard rock near the shrine. The “just as” (ώσει) is a significant marker of an approximate description.

A fiery nature is one of the aspects of the angels’ being naturally. See, for instance, Pseudo-Dionysius, *De coelestii hierarchia*, XV.2, *La Hiérarchie Céleste*, 166–71.

The importance of the fiery nature in theology is translated into hagiographical description as seen in the Chonae hagiographies. See also T. Preger, *Scriptores originum Constantiopolitanarum*, 2 vols. (Leipzig, 1901–1907; rp. New York, 1975) I:87.

73. See Theodore of Stoudios (759–826), *In sanctos angelos*, 3, PG 99:733CD, on this passage: the “divine angel transformed himself into a pillar of fire,” and “the beauty of the countenance took on the image of a cloud.”

74. Sissinius, *Acta apparitionis in Chonis*, 16, AASS Sept. 8:46F–7A.

word, Sissinius also says, while Moses had to use his staff. The first miracle of stopping the water, then, is comparable to Moses's, but the second is even greater. Michael struck the impenetrable rock which resounded like thunder and shook the entire land, leaving the inhabitants in the surrounding area panic-stricken. At the creation of the chasm Michael made his important promise, that his benign presence would overshadow that place (18.8–17).⁷⁵

The encounter clearly owes some of its structure of awful epiphany, incomprehensible vision, and comforting and revelations to the Book of Daniel, as well as to the Gospel according to Matthew (28:2ff., for example). The identification of the vision is equally fraught. Michael asks, “Do you know who I am, that you shudder at my sight?” To this Archippus can only deny knowledge. Michael thereupon states his identity in terms that evoke the meeting of Joshua and the angel before the battle of Jericho (Joshua 5:14).⁷⁶ Like Joshua, Archippus misapprehends the nature of the epiphany but he saves the situation by not falling on his face and worshipping the “captain of the host of the Lord” as Joshua did. The appearance of the angel to Joshua occurs on holy ground for he tells Joshua, “Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy” (5:15). This comparison is not explicit in the miracle story but the appearance of Michael at Chonae is *also* the marking of a permanently hallowed spot, as his promises indicate. In other words, the sanctification of the site, and the identification of the agent of that sanctification, is predetermined.

Michael's appearances at Chonae in the miracle story are multi-form. His first appearance is in a dream to the Laodicean pagan. The story described Michael as merely a “night vision” (4.2ff.) in the

75. Μηναία τὸ δόλοῦ ἐνιαυτοῦ, 6 vols. (Rome, 1888–1901) I:71 on Moses and Michael at Horeb (Ex. 17:6), and, 73, at the Red Sea. Michael is at the Burning Bush (Ex. 3:2), as described in the *Analecta hymnica graeca*, ed. A. Kominis (Rome, 1972) 232; the text also suggests a comparison between Moses who parted the sea with his staff (Ex. 14:16.21) and Michael's own similar deed (237). See Pantaleon, *Narratio miraculorum maximi archangeli Michaelis*, XIII, PG 140:580C–1A, on Michael's role in the engulfing of Pharaoh's army in the Red Sea (Ex. 14:1ff.).

76. Elliott, *Roads to Paradise*, 116ff., notes that in the Book of Tobias Raphael identifies himself in this way: Ego enim sum Raphael angelus (12:15).

anonymous version; in the Metaphrastian version, the pagan saw “a more Godly vision announcing better goodnesses” (22.13ff.). The Laodicean pagan is granted an incomplete glimpse of the Archangel, although his vision, according to Metaphrastes again, was a vision of some intellectual being standing beside him (22.22–23). “For he was not worthy of being a spectator of such things, how then can he see with the eyes of his soul, embracing as he did, an unbeliever, that gloom of the faithless” (22.18–20)? And the apparition told the pagan to go to the spring, and the result was the new chapel for Michael’s shrine (22.23ff.).

Later, in the destructive schemes of the local pagans, Michael makes his presence known in several different ways. The first plan of the pagans was direct assault, but this went wrong when they encountered at the source an inexplicable phenomenon: “Those who came saw flames of fire reflecting from the water in their own faces. And in this way the disbelievers were turned back, having been overpowered” (9.2–5). After this the pagans determined an indirect approach would accomplish their ends better and they diverted the Chryses; but Michael’s invisible intervention subverted that plot as well: the river divided in two and missed the shrine altogether. The pagans then decided to go one better; they dammed the Lykokaphros and the Kouphos until the rivers should have enough power to overwhelm the shrine, the hermit and the holy spring. At this point the most dramatic epiphany occurs:

In order therefore that the just be safeguarded, and the site of his holy spring, and church ... and that God be extolled, he who makes great and inscrutable miracles, the Archangel Michael acting as servant was seen just as a pillar of fire reaching from the earth to the heavens and standing on the immovable rock by the shrine....⁷⁷

77. *Acta apparitionis in Chonis*, 15, AASS Sept. 8:46E. According to Sissinius, Michael disappeared as incomprehensibly as he arrived, “The venerable one saw him as if a flame of fire streamed up into the heavens, filled with puzzlement and fear, he went back to sing psalms in the holy shrine, ‘God has sent his angel and liberated and saved me from the snares of the beasts, and he guarded his sacred shrine from the inundation of the waters’” (*Acta apparitionis in Chonis*, 18, AASS Sept. 8:47AB).

The miracle story describes, then, a progression of revelation, all of a difficult and incomprehensible nature. Michael's mutability is an inescapable aspect of his appearances, as well as the manner in which human comprehension and description come up short in the face of such epiphanies. The security of angelic epiphanies from Hebrew scripture offers a kind of textual anchor in these miracle stories for otherwise impossible descriptions.

The epiphany on the mountainside at Gargano, for instance, uses direct borrowings from scripture to describe Michael's terrible appearance. The day after he had appeared in a dream to the bishop predicting "angelic victory" of the Sipontini, Michael made his presence on the mountain known through rumblings, darkness and lightning, which borrow directly from Exodus 19:16: "And it came to pass on the third day, when it was morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of a trumpet exceeding loud; and all the people that were in the camp trembled." The Greek text is more overt than the Latin version about its scriptural models and also calls up images from Isaiah 60:2 ("For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the peoples; but upon thee the Lord will arise, and His glory shall be seen upon thee").⁷⁸ The fire that mysteriously announces the presence of Michael at the shrine of Psellus has appropriated the particulars of the textual description from the scene of Moses and the Burning Bush in Exodus (3:2ff.). Michael as the fire which does not consume the bush, as the pillar of fire that led the Israelites, as the lightning and darkness on Sinai, are all sanctioned allusions to incomprehensible epiphanies of divine power.⁷⁹

78. Lanza 303.83ff. and 315; *AASS* Sept. 8:61D.

79. One further example is the appearance of Michael to Gregory the Great (ca. 540–604) on top of Hadrian's Mausoleum, subsequently Castel San Angelo, in 590 (*AASS* Sept. 8:72BC). Michael appears and silently returns his sword to its sheath, thereby signaling the reconciliation between God and the people of Rome. This reconciliation is effected through the disclosure of the source of the affliction and of the cessation of its attack. Michael is the bearer of reconciliation, not particularly benign, and of the abeyance of heavenly wrath, which is very much in the tradition of an Old Testament appearance. Rome is likened implicitly to Jerusalem, and Gregory to David, as the appearance has an antecedent at 1 Chronicles 21:15–27: "And God sent an angel unto Jerusalem to destroy it: and as he was destroying, the Lord beheld, and he repented him of the evil, and said to the angel

The miracle stories did not efface Michael's character as an angel of nature or as an elemental force. The choice of texts from scripture emphasizes this aspect of the Archangel's nature while also pointing to the Archangel's essential indescribability. The miracle stories describe Michael's appearance at Chonae as fire, thunder and lightning. Miracle stories often express Michael's character by such naturalistic metaphors, and, as Olga Rojdestvensky wrote, Michael is typically described in such elemental terms as "flashes of lightning, explosions of thunder, babbling of springs, sound of water falls, mystery of abyss and of grottoes, eternal silence of summits."⁸⁰ The descriptions of Michael are in an essential way profoundly dissembling, and the revelation at Chonae and his personal intervention in the local geography were strategies by which Michael's expansive and elusive character gained delineation and real presence.⁸¹

The topos concerning the distance between humanity and the angels common to theological speculation is equally present in the descriptions in miracle stories of the acts of the angels in this world. Pantaleon, in his miracle story of the Archangel Michael, is explicit about the inability of words to convey, and human comprehension to embrace, the nature of the angels.

How therefore shall we undertake to praise you according to your excellence, by what means shall we aspire to your praises, O Leader of the Host of the almighty God? What incorporeal voice, accord-

that destroyed, It is enough, stay now thine hand.... And David lifted up his eyes, and saw the angel of the Lord stand between the earth and the heaven, having a sword in his hand stretched out over Jerusalem.... And the Lord commanded the angel; and he put his sword again into the sheath thereof." Again, scripture provides the structure for these difficult epiphanies.

This connection of the appearance of Michael to Gregory and 1 Chronicles was noted by Hasluck, *Letters on Religions and Folklore*, 84–85.

80. O. Rojdestvensky, *Le culte de saint Michel et le moyen age latin* (Paris, 1922) 54, and also 53: "La dramatique légende de saint Michel, pleine de jeux de lumière et d'ombre, devait ressusciter avec une puissance toute particulière là où les forces volcaniques et neptuniennes creusaient les précipices, faisaient jaillir les cascades, là où les vapeurs, fumées et flammes sulfuriques faisaient irruption." See also W. Lueken, *Michael. Eine Darstellung und Vergleichung der jüdischen und der morganländisch-christlichen Tradition vom Erzengel Michael* (Göttingen, 1898) 73–74.

81. Gothein, "L'arcangelo Michele," 108–109.

ing with the level of your incorporeal intelligence, shall we offer by means of our material and corporeal lips? What sounds shall we use to signify the ineffability and inexplicability of your glory? It is doubtful in truth that the collective nature of all earth born creation could laud and praise you, you who are the Leader of the Heavenly Host. For the matter of your divine beauty and splendor cannot be narrated and told by words. For in this way marvelous knowledge of God was made by us.... It is not possible by human comprehension for him to be apprehended and discovered.⁸²

If real description is therefore impossible, then recognition and identification of angelic epiphany is equally laden with risk of failure. As noted above, Archippus was completely at a loss until Michael revealed his identity in terms comprehensible to a man—and to the listener—thanks to the scriptural meaning behind this particular identification. At Gargano, Michael was identified subsequently by dream revelation and more securely by the material effects. Pantaleon also relates a miracle at the church of Michael at Eusebios, Constantinople, concerning a certain candle-maker Marcianus. All the doors of the church were suddenly flung open and towards him came “a fearful man as out of the heaven, with a rush descending on horseback on a white and terrible steed.”⁸³ Michael is dressed in the robe of a *praepositus*, or court official.⁸⁴ Marcianus knew only the terrifying aspect of his ecstatic vision until Michael declared his proprietorship of the shrine. Although Michael led Marcianus to the candle before his own icon, the icon plays no role in

82. *Narr. mir. max. arch. Mich.*, I, PG 140:573B–4B.

83. The parallel with the appearance of the angels to drive Apollonius out of the temple in the Third Book of Maccabees is striking: “there appeared from heaven angels, with flashing armour, who filled them with dread and terror. Then did Apollonius fall half dead in the court of the Gentiles and he stretched his hands to heaven....” See *The Third and Fourth Book of Maccabees*, trans. M. Hadas (New York, 1953; rp. New York, 1976) 164 (4:9–14).

84. F. Halkin, *Inédits byzantins d’Ochrida, Candie et Moscou* (Brussels, 1963) 149–50; the other comes from the Life of Andrew the Fool (seventh century?), 233–36, PG 111:877A–80C. Other examples are found in Ch. Angelidi, “La version longue de la Vision du moine Cosmas,” AB 101(1983):86.188–187.196; Preger, *Scriptores originum Constantinopolitanarum*, I:86.8ff.; and Achmet ibn Sirin (late eighth/early ninth century), *Oneirocriticon*, ed. F. Drexel (Leipzig, 1925) 5–6 (#10).

determining the identity of the vision but only the place and means of real healing.

Visual identification of an Archangel is not possible since miracle stories and theology both agree that he has no form fully comprehensible to humans. Consequently, any stable resemblance in images of such a being remains out of reach. Cyril Mango has written that the angels are represented as they are, that is, as beardless, winged young men, because that is how they generally appear. “Whenever angels and archangels make themselves manifest in the Lives of saints and other edifying texts they do so in the guise of eunuchs or imperial *cubicularii*, not that of emperors.”⁸⁵ Instances of the angels appearing as eunuchs are not uncommon.⁸⁶ Yet the texts are not homogeneous in this regard, as the miracle stories of the Archangel Michael discussed above show.⁸⁷ Moreover, the relation between description in miracle stories and the images of angels is not straightforward. Making images of angels is not a matter of transcription of visual information (or even textual description), since visions of these beings are clearly difficult to process, comprehend and render.

85. C. Mango, “St. Michael and Attis,” *DChAE* 12(1984):44.

86. The post-Iconoclastic assimilation of court officials, particularly eunuchs, and angels, and the incongruities of that assimilation, have been examined recently by E. V. Maltese, “Gli angeli in terra: sull’imaginario dell’angelo bizantino,” *Materiali e discussioni per l’analisi dei testi classici* 24(1990):111–32 [= *Dimensione bizantine. Donne, angeli e demoni nel medioevo greco* (Turin, 1995) 69–92].

87. Finally, one need only browse through the many texts concerning Michael and the other angels collected by Amélineau, *Contes et romans de l’Égypte chrétienne*, to realize the endless variations possible. For instance, Michael appears to Donatius, in “Comment se convertit la ville d’Athènes,” as “un homme lumineux sous l’apparence d’un général d’armée, tenant un sceptre d’or à la main” (*ibid.*, 2). And in the “Vision de Saint Jean l’Évangile racontée par le patriarche Timothée,” Michael “descendit du ciel monté sur sa barque de chérubims, escorté de tous les anges, des saints, des plus grands parmi les prophètes et les martyrs: ils étaient tous enveloppés d’une gloire indescriptible” (*ibid.*, 13–14). And the Archangel Gabriel in the “Histoire d’Aour” appeared to the young Aour in another fashion: “Depuis le jour de ma naissance, le vingt-deuxième jour de chaque mois, il vient à moi vers le matin un oiseau dont le face brille comme le soleil; il est ceint d’une ceinture dorée, coiffée d’une couronne d’émerande et tient à sa maison une baguette d’or rouge. Son corps semble du feu, ses pieds du cuivre brillant, sa figure est celle d’un homme, ses traits étonnantes et le son de sa voix est comme le bruit des flots de la mer quand elle est agitée. Toutes les fois que je l’ai vu … je suis tombé à ses pieds rempli d’effroi et il m’a relevé en disant: Ne crains pas! je suis l’archange Gabriel que me tiens devant le trône de Dieu …” (*ibid.*, 112–13).

Identification of an angel by means of the description on an image is theoretically possible, however, if not in any way definitive. In the text praising Michael written by Psellus, a monk named Ephraim was able to recognize Michael because the Archangel had chosen the form manifested on his image for this epiphany in the monastery's church.⁸⁸ And the miracle story of Artemius, written in the 660s about his shrine in the church of John the Baptist in Oxeia at Constantinople, describes an identification of an angel.⁸⁹ One of the stories in the miracle story describes the night vision of a young girl, Euphemia.⁹⁰ In her vision angels led her to the lead coffin of the eponymous saint of the shrine, Artemius, and made her lie down in it. The coffin was then locked by the saint, trapping her inside. When she awoke, recovered from her illness, she gave an account of her vision. Her mother asked her if she had seen the angels, and Euphemia replied that she had. Her mother then asked her in what form had they appeared.⁹¹ The girl answered by indicating the images of the angels found in that church.⁹²

The mother's question is telling. In asking what form the angels appeared, she was acknowledging the possibility of other guises. And in voluntarily making themselves commensurate with their appearance on images in the church, the angels revealed their ability to descend in form for human comprehension. In other words, angels manifest their terrible elemental force in famous instances of awesome intervention but for this girl the angels took a benign aspect in keeping with her youth and fitness.

The topos of recognition of a holy person by means of his or her image, therefore, has relevance for discussion of miracle story de-

88. Fisher, *Michaelis Pselli Orationes Hagiographicae*, 253, 565–69. On this episode, see A. Cutler and R. Browning, "In the Margins of Byzantium? Some Icons in Michael Psellos," *BMGS* 16(1992):24–25.

89. C. Mango, "On the History of the *Templon* and the Martyrion of St. Artemios at Constantinople," *Zografi* 10(1979):40ff.

90. V.S. Crisafulli and J.W. Nesbitt, *The Miracles of St. Artemios. A Collection of Miracle Stories by an Anonymous Author of Seventh-Century Byzantium* (Leiden, New York and Köln, 1997) 176–84, and Mango, "On the History of the *Templon*," 43.

91. Crisafulli/Nesbitt, *The Miracles of St. Artemios*, 180, 23.

92. Crisafulli/Nesbitt, *The Miracles of St. Artemios*, 180, 23–24.

scriptions of angels. For Gilbert Dagron, images play a central role in the identification of saints in miracle stories, to the point of fundamentally determining the manner in which Byzantines visually perceived their saints.⁹³ For example, Cosmas and Damian approach the bed of a supplicant “in the form in which they are outlined.”⁹⁴ A letter of Nilus of Ankara (d. ca. 430) describes an episode of St. Platon’s life in which he freed a monk’s son from prison. Platon was recognized by the son through the saint’s image.⁹⁵ A similar episode exists in the tenth-century *Vita* of Irene of Chrysobalanton: “... while the holy woman stood interceding with her hands lifted up, she saw Basil the Great standing before her, looking such as the icons represent him.”⁹⁶

The second way miracle stories can state resemblance are instances where the saint appears to provide a perfect model for a painter, effectively taking the brush out of the painter’s hand. For instance, the “life” of Cornelius the Centurion emphasized the fidelity of the saint’s image, which was venerated at Skepis in the Hellespont. The exactitude of the copy, after the archetype, was particularly commended. The painter Egratius was hired by the bishop to make a copy of this image in order to send it from Skepis to Caesarea in

93. G. Dagron, “Holy Images and Likeness,” *DOP* 45(1991):30ff.; and idem, “Rêver de Dieu et parler de soi. Le rêve et son interprétation d’après les sources byzantines,” in *I sogni nel medioevo*, ed. T. Gregory (Rome, 1985) 42ff.

94. L. Deubner, *Kosmas und Damian. Texte und Einleitung* (Leipzig, 1907) 133.23–24.

95. See Mansi XIII:32C–3C.

96. *The Life of St Irene Abbess of Chrysobalanton. A Critical Edition with Introduction, Translation, Notes and Indices*, ed. J. O. Rosenqvist (Uppsala, 1986) 56.9–13: “... τοιούτον οὖν αἱ εἰκόνες γράφοντιν.”

Other examples are found in the seventh-century *Vita* of Theodore of Sykeon, written by his disciple George; see *Vie de Théodore de Sykéon*, I:34 (39.5–6): “The two saints were seen by him according to the likeness therefore of that which is seen in divine worship.” Festugière translates this as “sous l’aspect qu’ils avaient en cette image de culte.” The monk is said to be praying beneath the icon of Cosmas and Damian. And also at I:29 (32.9–13), Theodore’s mother has a vision of George according to the depicted story of the martyr George. George is described as a golden youth with curly hair and shining aspect.

And from the tenth-century “Vision of Cosmas the Monk”: “And suddenly, as if sent by someone, two men appeared with white robes and very venerable, and I recognised them to be the apostles Andrew and John, as I was put in mind ($\alpha\pi\alpha\lambda\sigma\gamma\iota\zeta\mu\epsilon\nu\sigma$) of their appearances on the holy icons.” See Angelidi, “La version longue de la Vision du moine Cosmas,” 4.125–28.

Palestine. Egratius was then afflicted and healed by the saint, and with thanks he made an image “just he had seen him.” The portrait was then sent to Palestine and valued, the narrator says, because of the exactitude of its copying.⁹⁷ From examples such as these, Dagron concludes that the relationship between images and their models is reversed and “that [images] are no longer attached to the past but to the future.”⁹⁸ And further, “It is no longer the image that resembles the saint, but the saint who resembles his image.”⁹⁹

The number of examples in which the image determines the nature of the vision is, however, quite limited. The majority of examples of appearances of saints, by far, is in forms of disguise, if the miracle story provides a description at all. Artemius appears as a butcher, sailor, patrician, and in other guises.¹⁰⁰ Cosmas and Damian appear in many different guises (in the form of clerics, for example), alone or with a third person; they do their work either by “invisible hands” or “their own hands.”¹⁰¹ This last denotes the really important aspect: their activity and traces of their activity radiate from the center of their cult, that is, their bodies and relics. Nevertheless, the most significant admission concerning the nature of the saints’ appearances is that they appear “in a form *not* their own,”¹⁰² as the miracle story states. The miracle story of Cyrus and John furnishes another important example. It describes the two saints as appearing fulgent, in white robes, in a monk’s habit, as doctors, as the deacon Julian and in various other guises, but also, significantly, in

97. F. Halkin, “Un abrégé inédit de la vie ancienne et disparue de Corneille le Centurion,” *RSBN* n.s. 1(1964):37 (#6). And other examples are found in the *Vita S. Mariae Iunoris* (before 866?–ca. 902/3), *AASS* Nov. 4:699BC, and the life of Athanasius the Athonite (925/30–ca. 1001), *Vitae duae antiquae Sancti Athanasii Athonitae*, *Corpus Christianorum*, Series Graeca, vol. 9, ed. J. Noret (Turnhout, 1982) 122 (#254).

98. Dagron, “Holy Images and Likeness,” 31.

99. Dagron, “Holy Images and Likeness,” 31, and also: “more than ever it is [the saints’] cult image that serves as a reference.”

100. Crisafulli/Nesbitt. *The Miracles of St. Artemios*, 88.15–16, 96.22, 104.12–13, 144.21, 194.15–16.

101. See Deubner, *De incubatione*, 68ff.

102. Deubner, *Kosmas und Damian*, 99.21 (my emphasis). And other examples of guises: 135.25, “appearing in the form of a περιχύτος,” and 145.43–44, “the two appeared to him in the forms of clerics.”

their *own* form.¹⁰³ Again, the saints must acknowledge an earthly existence, even after death, that determines the essential nature of their being, even if this does not altogether regulate their subsequent manifestations. Angels have no such mooring. They are changeable by nature and essentially unknowable—*all* their outward forms are not their own.

This chapter has sought to indicate the means by which miracle stories, and cult as well, made the Archangel Michael more apprehensible and proximate. For a being that is bodiless, immaterial and elemental, the signs of appearance and presence made apparent in the texts are tangible and incontrovertible. Moreover, because of Michael's uncontainable nature, they are impressions; Michael does not relinquish anything of his "body," only indications of attendance. These signs that are both tangible and provisional give the texts and cult their special tension in that they simultaneously assert that he is really present but also powerfully immanent. By means of retro-motivation, indeed, Michael's acts, and even his will, are superseded by the texts' logic. The place name engenders its own sequence of activities and the text works backwards from "the place was thereafter known as Chonae" to create Michael's seminal act preset by language itself.

This desire for more apprehensibility is the complement of the other textual device examined in this chapter, that is, how miracle stories "got round" the difficulties of expressing the inexpressible nature of Michael. The seamless application of scriptural description to this task of expression is the clearest sign of descriptive impasse. On an overt level, the scriptural passages indicate enigmatic theophanies and venerable acts that parallel and prefigure Michael's own appearances and acts. Michael is like Moses in the miraculous manipulation of water for the protection of God's chosen people. Michael's manifestations recall the phenomena revealed to the prophets during sacred disclosures in the past. And the scriptural structures of receiving epiphany found in Daniel, Joshua and Matthew provide a mold within which witness under the New Covenant can be cast. In this

103. Deubner, *De incubatione*, 8off.

sense, the narrators of these miracle stories of Michael provided scriptural models of revelation that were recognizable and accessible descriptions of the Archangel's famous moments on earth.

On the level of latent meaning, the arrogation of description signals at important points the lack of ability, or even intent, of speech and text to render in an original or descriptive fashion a being like the Archangel Michael. On this level, recognition of the original site of the text, in Exodus or Matthew for instance, is not essential for the audience. The descriptions of Michael as fire and earthquake and lightning do not rely for their full meaning on the audience's identifying the original context of the description. They signal the difficulty of comprehension, just the same, in their evocation of grand, irrational phenomena: the formless Archangel assumes all of these elements as his cloak but none are his own, none make him fully known.

Material images are likewise allusive to difficult nature, and this allusive quality makes angels' images incapable of possessing real likeness. Beings as transcendental as angels possess no definitive likeness inherently, and images partake equally of this indefinable resemblance. Recalling the theology of Pseudo-Dionysius, images are dissembling signs which the viewer engages in intellectually and without adherence. Describing an approach to images of angels, Agathias's epigram reveals an ability to interpret material images as the symbolic means to knowledge of an incomprehensible creature.¹⁰⁴ In this description of the image of the Archangel, the difficulty of comprehension derives from the incorporeal nature which would seem to be incompatible with material representation; but in Agathias's conception, the image also provides the viewer with the means to approach knowledge of the distant and immaterial Archangel by way of contemplation of the colors and outlines on the surface of the image. The material image is, therefore, the bridge between mundane reality and spiritual truths otherwise unattainable.

Michael's bodiless, relic-less existence provides such signs for human comprehension; less ambiguous material effects such as

104. Discussed in chapters 2 and 3.

Michael's transformations of landscape, imprints of invisibility, are essential proofs for a degree of knowledge of his activity and nature. Miracle stories and images work subtly. Texts exploit recognizable patterns from scripture to give the descriptions of events and appearances structure but at the same time deny any essential descriptive-ness in their evocation of elemental and multiform wonders. In a comparable way, images depend on their non-resembling qualities to attract and lead the viewer to recognition of a higher, invisible reality. Michael transcends the ability of words and images to describe such a reality but it is this inability that attracts and compels contemplation.

CONCLUSION

This study has been concerned with representation in the widest sense. Examinations of material images notwithstanding, it has primarily explored conceptual problems involved in representing angels that arise from the unquantifiable nature of the bodiless host. “Subtle bodies” was a favored theological formulation for the nature of angels. The formulation was ascribed to Macarius the Great,¹ but it was the primary definition used by John of Thessalonike (d. 649?) in his defense of the worship of angels’ images ostensibly before a pagan opponent.² Moreover, the fathers of the Second Council of Nicaea in 787 included the “dialogue” between John of Thessalonike and the pagan in the conciliar acts, and so the definition—slippery, imprecise, but apt—became the basic definition of the nature of God’s messengers. Complementary to its examination of the representational problems of angels, this study has also examined the “image” of the holy man who sought the intercession of the Archangel

1. See the Introduction.

2. Mansi, XIII:164–65; H. Thümmel, *Die Frühgeschichte der ostkirchlichen Bilderlehre. Texte und Untersuchungen zur Zeit vor dem Bilderstreit*, Texte und Untersuchungen, vol. 139 (Berlin, 1992) 327–28. And see G. Peers, “Imagination and Angelic Epiphany,” *BMGS* 21(1997):113–31, on this text.

Michael and witnessed the awful result of that prayer. Clearly, worship of angels, their “persons” and their images both, was a divisive issue in the Byzantine world, and the story of the miracle at Chonae was an attempt to establish a basis for a more seemly and more orthodox worship.

Evidently, then, angels raised issues that writers of theology and miracle stories tried to resolve. Many of the difficulties arose from the pagan antecedents to angel worship and, indeed, their iconography in Christian art. The “dialogue” of John of Thessalonike reveals just this difficulty as late as the seventh century, and its resolution by this earlier theologian still had relevance for the Council at Nicaea in the following century. The pagan, with whom John was in theory debating, had no difficulty in seeing the parallels between pagan worship of gods and Christian worship of angels. In a most polite manner, he observed that Christians paint the angels as human and worship them through these paintings, despite the belief that these beings were not human but incorporeal and spiritual. Surely, he reasoned, like Porphyry long before, this practice is no different than the pagan worship of their gods. John, of course, sidestepped the parallel drawn and offered a complete rebuttal to this possible raprocement. He based his position primarily on the truth of the Christian pantheon versus the falseness of the pagan gods, but the fact that such a rebuttal was necessary as late as the seventh century shows that perceived parallels between angels and pagan beings were still possible.

The miracle story of Michael’s appearances at Chonae is further proof of an ongoing problem that the church thought necessary to combat. The story itself reveals that in the eighth century the issue of proper approach to angels was still alive. The caretaker Archippus is a prescriptive “image” of the appropriate manner of praying to the Archangel, and his answered prayer is the clearest indication of its appropriateness. The Archangel nonetheless revealed his origins as an angel of uncontrollable natural forces—earthquake, lightning, thunder and water—and, although the story sublimates these forces in scriptural allusions, Michael still had some of the overweening characteristics that made an orthodox presentation of angelology neces-

sary in the miracle story. The miracle story could not altogether efface Michael the Nile god of the Coptic text examined in the Introduction.

This study has also sought to demonstrate that representing angels—in miracle stories and material images—was part of a desire to make these bodiless beings more comprehensible and proximate. As theological discussion of angels had antecedents in pagan vocabulary and concepts, and contended with these antecedents, so self-conscious continuity from the Classical past was a characteristic of descriptions of angels in the visual arts. Sculptors, painters and mosaicists clearly were aware of models available in pagan art that could aid them in their search for an iconography capable of describing, albeit partially, the special immaterial, formless nature of angels. As seen on the Sarigüzel sarcophagus (fig. 3), they borrowed iconographic elements from pagan art, most notably wings, to this end, but maintained at the same time the angels' peculiarity as Christian beings.

Most Christian viewers evidently found this iconography sufficiently expressive of angelic nature and activity. On the evidence of sixth-century epigrams, painted panels with single figures of angels or Archangels became more common in devotion in this period. As a way of communicating the nature and activities of this invisible host, many Christians perceived these icons as “guarantors of knowledge,”³ even if images of angels ultimately frustrated full comprehension of the models.

In the period preceding Iconoclasm, sources dealing with images of angels reveal an increasing desire to regulate and define the place of images in Christian worship.⁴ For some Christians, the break with the Classical past in the visual arts was not clear enough, and the iconography of angels, though consciously distanced from its antecedents, was sullied by any association with pagan art. From the fourth to the seventh century, the writings of Macarius Magnes, Severus of Antioch and John of Thessalonike reveal a defensiveness on the part of Christians concerning the iconography of these bodi-

3. Cameron, “The Language of Images,” 2.

4. See Cameron, “The Language of Images,” 30.

less beings. The writings of opponents to angels' images also show dissent over the route to knowledge that images provide. For these opponents, material signs were clearly inadequate to describe the transcendental nature of angels.

Yet the increasing importance that images came to have in the period preceding Iconoclasm attests to a wide acceptance of material images as a means to understand divine things. The divergence shown in these two positions stands for a fundamental divide in Byzantine society over appropriate commemoration and worship. This study has attempted to describe the long-standing debate over the conceptual problems of representing angels, both visually and verbally. In the course of the sixth and seventh centuries, as Christian images became more common in devotion, these debates became more acute. This study has traced the "realignment" in Byzantine society that Averil Cameron describes but with specific regard to angels in texts of this period, taking passages from theological writings on images, question and answer guides and anti-Jewish tracts.⁵ All of these writings showed an increased concern over the meaning and nature of angelic signs, appropriate commemoration and material worship. This struggle over worship and images only became more acute in the eighth and ninth centuries, when this crisis came to a head with the declaration of Iconoclasm in the 720s, and the sources from the period of Iconoclasm attest to the role angels and their images played in this conflict.

The end of Iconoclasm in 843 effectively resolved the debate over the role of images of angels that had been decided in favor of a careful and abundant synthesis of material signs in spiritual worship. Just the same, images of angels always partake of a measure of ambiguity despite their full acceptance into Byzantine worship. Cameron writes, "Religious images ... fell naturally into place as one of the signs by which the impossibility of understanding God through language could be circumvented."⁶ This statement implies, however,

5. See Cameron, "The Language of Images," 3–4.

6. Cameron, "The Language of Images," 30; and see L. Brubaker, "Byzantine Art in the Ninth Century: Theory, Practice, and Culture," *BMGS* 13(1989):75ff.

that the debates over images that lasted from the sixth to the ninth century were resolved in favor of images that were explicit and literal in their description of spiritual reality.⁷ Rather, the tension between manifest form and incomprehensible nature, evident in the texts—epigrams, theology and miracle stories—is a defining characteristic of images of angels throughout the Byzantine period. This tension continued to determine the production and perception of images of angels long after the end of Iconoclasm. This Conclusion also aims, then, to examine briefly the tension between presence and transcendence, description and incomprehensibility, in images and texts of the middle and late Byzantine periods.

A Palaiologan icon of the Archangel Michael in the Byzantine Museum, Athens, is a particularly fine example of the pull between materiality and incorporeality that images of angels can communicate (fig. 19).⁸ This icon, in fact, manifests an especially subtle manipulation of style and iconography. Michael's spiritual qualities were made immediately clear to the Byzantine viewer since the Archangel is winged. Michael gracefully holds a staff and an orb in his hands, and a delicate fillet, tied at the back, is visible in his shoulder-length hair. The face of the Archangel is handled with great refinement. Indeed, the qualities of his face and expression, the full mouth, finely modeled cheeks and chin and detailed shaping of luxuriant hair, show a desire on the part of the painter to manifest a degree of sensuality in this image. Yet the painter at the same time denies the apparently terrestrial presence of the Archangel, in particular through his treatment of the eyes which are large and focused directly on the beholder. The Archangel's piercing eyes create a distance from the realm of the viewer that the sensual handling of the Archangel para-

7. This position is taken also by H. L. Kessler, "Real Absence: Early Medieval Art and the Metamorphosis of Vision," in *Morfologie sociali e culturali in Europa fra tarda antichità e alto medioevo*, Settimane vol. 45 (Spoleto, 1998) II:1157–70. But as C. von Schönborn, *L'icône du Christ. Fondements théologiques élaborées entre le Ier et le IIer Concile de Nicée (325–787)* (Fribourg, 1976) 217ff., has demonstrated, the characteristic of an image of Christ is opacity and particularity.

8. See M. Soteriou, "Παλαιολογεῖος εἰκών τοῦ Ἀρχαγγέλου Μιχαήλ," *DChAE* 1(1959): 80ff., M. Alpatov, "Sur l'iconographie des anges dans l'art de Byzance et de l'ancienne Russie," *Zograf* 11(1980):6, and *Conversation with God. Icons from the Byzantine Museum of Athens (9th–15th Centuries)*. The Hellenistic Centre, London, 22 May–20 June 1998 (Athens, 1998) 65–69.



Figure 19. Icon of the Archangel Michael, Byzantine Museum, Athens, Palaiologan. Photo: Byzantine Museum, Athens.

doxically encourages. But the eyes also impart a sense of presence since the archangel is not gazing frontally out of the icon. In order to accommodate the equipment he presents, he has his right shoulder pushed closer to the picture plane than the left, and consequently his head turns slightly back to the left. This turning, found in some early icons also (fig. 1), gives the impression of animation, of the

body and eyes swiveling in order to take the viewer into account. So the eyes have the ability to create distance and presence at the same time, both through the penetrating scrutiny and the illusion of alertness which the sidelong stare implies. On this icon, style and iconography form a conjunction of corporeality and transcendence that encourages approach but thwarts familiarity: ultimately, the icon describes a nature contingent upon our material world, a nature that is only partially described and describable.⁹

While a formal analysis of this particularly fine example shows that painters could communicate the conditional quality of human comprehension of angelic nature, epigrams and ekphraseis from the Middle and Late Byzantine periods demonstrate that this quality was fully appreciated by the Byzantine viewer. The contingency of angelic nature, which images can state so subtly and compellingly, evoked articulate responses in writers on images and these responses show a striking continuity in writings about images of angels from the sixth century on. The persistence of these responses could be interpreted as normative, that is, as literary topoi that reappear periodically in Byzantine culture without demonstrable connection to real images.¹⁰ Yet formal analyses of images of angels show that painters did sometimes employ elements of style and iconography to attempt description of the problems of angelic nature. Texts about images of angels demonstrate that Byzantine viewers were fully engaged with these artistic attempts. The allusive, contingent quality of such images was a significant intellectual and devotional assumption that had real and ongoing meaning for the Byzantine viewer. Noteworthy, too, is the continuity from iconophile descriptions of angelic appearance and images to these later texts; evidently, iconophile image theory did have a degree of influence over the perpetuation of certain

9. Charles Barber has described the non-representational quality of Byzantine art as its primary attractive component; that is, the tension between reality and abstraction draws the viewer to contemplate the image in a more active manner. See C. Barber, "From Transformation to Desire: Art and Worship after Byzantine Iconoclasm," *ArtB* 75(1993):12: "one could argue that the formal practices employed in Byzantine art draw attention to the pictorial field itself as an autonomous significant space rather than as a representational space."

10. A problem addressed in D. Freedberg, *The Power of Images. Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (Chicago and London, 1989) 291–94.

perceptions of images after the issues had been decided in the mid-ninth century.

Several epigrams on images of angels by John Mavropus (ca. 1000–ca. 1075/81), Metropolitan of Euchaïta, reveal continuity with earlier epigrams and image theory, and also a meaningful engagement with conceptual problems raised by material images of immaterial beings. Like the epigram of Agathias on the icon given in thanksgiving to the Archangel Michael, Mavropus also described an icon vowed because of particular devotion to the Archangel:

“On the bodiless one”: Who can give shape to the shapeless nature?
The faithful Theodora [has provided] a crown. And how does one
depict the unknowable sight? Faith easily reconciles all these things.
And what reward does this most pious woman desire? She yearns af-
ter the spiritual saviour of all things. Archistrategos, hasten, fulfill the
yearning. This faithful woman will hold to this desire especially.¹¹

In relating Theodora’s longing for the protection of the Archangel, Mavropus played on the idea of Michael’s immanence. The epigram noted the transcendence of Michael’s nature, the “shapeless” and “bodiless” quality of the Archangel, that is essentially “unknowable.” The gap between this unknowable nature and human comprehension is bridged by two complementary means: the tension between the material shaping of “the shapeless nature” and “the unknowable sight,” and the faith of the viewer that leads him or her to contemplation and conviction. This process is a remarkable condensation of the elaborate image theory of the Iconoclastic period. The need to prove the circumscribability of a formless, immaterial host and the subsequent defense of the symbolic, non-resembling iconography of angels had lost any urgency that the eighth-/ ninth-century context demanded; yet this same theoretical construct that justified the making of images of angels and the value they have for Christians was still valid in the eleventh century.

11. *Versus iambici*, PG 120:1177AB; *Iohannis Euchaitorum metropolitae quae in codice vaticano graeco 676 supersunt*, ed. P. de Lagarde (Göttingen, 1882; rp. Amsterdam, 1979) 38 (#73).

Another epigram by Mavropus also described the tension between matter and immateriality that is the defining characteristic of images of angels; while this tension was common in some form to other religious images, capturing ethereal formlessness on a material image is an act peculiar to representing angels. In this epigram, Mavropus recounted the unresolved coincidence of color and formlessness on an image of the Archangel Michael:

“On the Archangel Michael”: Light, spirit and fire, we know the angels to be altogether above baseness and feeling: but the leader of immaterial host is set here formed out of colours. O faith, such wonders have you the power to bring about, so easily [you give] shapeless nature in shapes. Yet the representation reveals what is represented, not as he is by nature, but as he was made manifest many times.¹²

The irresolution that such an image manifests is, in fact, its compelling feature. As the subject is transcendent “light, spirit and fire,” delineating the Archangel does not capture his nature in any essential way; rather, this act shows him in one of his forms made manifest in the past. Moreover, the sense that such an image is contingent on this partial disclosure of the Archangel’s true nature lends the image its attractive quality to the viewer. As Mavropus said, the fact that the bodiless Archangel has condescended to assume a form comprehensible to humanity in material colors and lines makes Michael paradoxically present: in these shapes, Michael’s presence is somehow brought nearer, made more proximate. Like the neo-Platonic descriptions of Agathias and the iconophiles on the apprehension of

12. *Anthologia graeca*, ed. E. Cougny, 3 vols. (Paris, 1871–1890) III:413; very like the epigram at *Versus iambici*, PG 120:1139A, *Iohannis Euchaitorum metropolitae*, 11–12 (#24). See also *Anthologia graeca*, III:361–63; III:415, “On the Archistrategos: In gold, like fire, from silver, as light, I shape you, light to me, flames to enemies”; and III:401: “On the Archistrategos: How does a material hand render the immaterial? The spirit the spirit renders, the hand the sign.” On some of these epigrams, see H. G. Thümmel, *Bilderlehre und Bilderstreit. Arbeiten zur Auseinandersetzung über die Ikone und ihre Begründung vornehmlich im 8. und 9. Jahrhundert* (Würzburg, 1991) 161ff.

such images, the material image is conceived as a non-resembling symbol that paradoxically makes the object of desire proximate.

If Mavropus described the compelling paradox of angels' images, Michael Psellus—who, incidentally, knew Mavropus—attempted an interpretation of the appearance and attributes used to render angelic nature and activity. In an analysis of the iconography of angels, Psellus separated the appearance of angels in images into its component parts. The most notable aspect is their anthropomorphic form: "this shows them to be rational beings; for man alone among all living creatures has been enriched with intellect and reason."¹³ The puzzling quality of the angels' appearances in images had profoundly discomfited such theologians as Epiphanius of Salamis and Severus of Antioch; that is, the depiction of angels as men with pagan-style dress and attributes was manifestly incommensurate with the angels' spiritual quality. Like the iconophiles, Psellus accepted the distance between angelic nature and material representation as a positive provision of incomplete knowledge of angels for humanity. Psellus's description is strikingly close in detail to the Palaiologan icon discussed above. While this icon is an especially fine example, and so worthy of examination, it is not exceptional iconographically, and clearly Psellus was examining an image very similar to that Palaiologan icon of the Archangel Michael. An ekphrasis closer in time to this Palaiologan icon is not lacking, however. For example, Symeon of Thessalonike, who died in 1429, responded in a similarly symbolic vein before just such an image.¹⁴ Both Psellus and Symeon, it should be

13. The individual attributes also hold clues for understanding the angels' being. The wings indicate "their exalting and heavenly upward motion"; the sphere often placed in one hand "suggests their quickness of movement: for the sphere is such that, touching a tiny portion of the ground, it is able to arrive independently of time and in less than an instant wherever it wishes"; the fillet denotes "the purity and chastity of their undefiled nature." See K. Snipes, "An Unedited Treatise of Michael Psellos on the Iconography of Angels and on the Religious Festivals Celebrated on Each Day of the Week," in *Gonimos. Neoplatonic and Byzantine Studies Presented to Leendert G. Westerlink at 75*, ed. J. Duffy and J. Peradotto (Buffalo, 1988) 200ff.

14. *Responsa ad Gabrielem Pentapolitanum*, PG 155:869B–D. He was asked the reason why the angels wear the fillet in images, why the angels and saints have nimbi, and why in the hands of the angels there are circular, cloudy forms. With regard to the fillet, he an-

noted, took seriously the iconography of the angels as imparting, or showing covertly, the divine truths which are otherwise difficult of access.¹⁵

As these two ekphraseis show a continuity in engagement with the iconography of angels, so Palaiologan epigrams consistently reveal an appreciation of the tension between materiality and immateriality that images of angels play on. Nicephorus Kallistus Xanthopoulos (before 1256?–ca. 1335?) wrote specifically on the presence evoked through representation, and, while the paradoxical quality of the description of immateriality in colors is raised, this quality is left at the level of an irreconcilable contradiction. Michael's presence is some-

swered, “In examining the images of the holy angels, one surmises that the fillet worn round their heads shows covertly ($\psi\pi\mu\varphi\alpha\iota\nu\epsilon\iota$) the purity of their intellect, since it is worn round the place of the intellect, so that they are even bonded intellectually to God, and by these things are offered [such] for our contemplation and care in a fine appearing manner ($\alpha\gamma\vartheta\delta\omega\epsilon\iota\delta\omega\varsigma$). And moreover, as they are pure and immaterial beings, they wear [the fillet] just as a crown of their endless and heavenly virtue. And they have worn this ($\delta\epsilon\delta\mu\epsilon\nu\alpha\varsigma$) about their hair, so that they do not move confusedly or superfluously, but only concerning divine compulsion, and their intellect is speeded from above.” Furthermore, the nimbi of the angels and of the saints “show covertly” the grace and radiance and action descended from God. Lastly, he addressed the reason for the orb carried by the angels, “And the cloudy and circular thing that the angels hold in their hands symbolises the consecration by the Spirit, and that they have been fixed immobile in the dispensation of the Saviour. In the midst of the circle is seen written this figure, X, so that by this Christ is revealed. But the form of the circle is also a theological sign. For if Christ teaches that he was made flesh, he also teaches that as God he has neither beginning nor end, and that Christ rules the universe, and has the whole cosmos in his hand, as David says.” The orb is not the symbol of fleetness that it was for Psellus but a sign of Christ's duophysite nature, and of the delegation of offices to the angels in the new dispensation brought about through the incarnation. In contrast to the incorruptibility that the fillet denoted for Psellus, the fillet was a sign of the angels' intellectual unity with God for Symeon of Thessalonike.

15. See, however, the negative remarks of C. Mango, “St. Michael and Attis,” *DChAE* 12(1984):39, on these texts. But see, too, H. Saradi-Mendelovici, “Christian Attitudes toward Pagan Monuments in Late Antiquity and Their Legacy in Later Byzantine Centuries,” *DOP* 44(1990):58, who describes how far Byzantine viewers were from understanding pagan statues. She cites the interpretation of the iconography of a statue of Athena from the eighth-century *Parastaseis* as an example: Athena is represented without helmet because her wisdom is invisible, the gorgon on her chest is to show the speed of her mind, and so on. See *Constantinople in the Eighth Century. The “Parastaseis Syntomoi Chronikai,”* ed. Averil Cameron, J. Herrin et al. (Leiden, 1984) #3; and see 215–16. The text does not demonstrate detachment or ignorance since indeed it is following a literary tradition from antiquity, as in the writings of Porphyry on statues (see chapters 2 and 3). Likewise, Psellus's and Symeon's interpretations are not banal or without real explanatory power but take their form from ancient topoi and newly apply them to symbolic, Christian images of angels.

how alluded to by the representation, for he is by some inexplicable means made present in this ambiguous image:

“On the Archangel Michael, a work of art by the famous painter, master Eulalios”: It seems either that the painter has dipped his brush in immateriality to delineate a spirit, or else the spirit remains unobserved in his picture, hiding in colours his incorporeal nature. How is it that matter can drag the spirit down and encompass the immaterial by means of colours? This is [a work] of ardent love (as shown by the facts), and it kindles the heart.¹⁶

The “kindling of the heart” implicitly refers to the intellectual or spiritual process which, paradoxically, the material image initiates. The closing sentence, then, indicates an important function of images of the Archangel as it was described in the sixth-century epigrams of Agathias and Nilus, and in the elaborate image theory of the iconophile theologians. Indeed, as stated in chapter 3, the conceptual framework established by Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite determined subsequent approaches to symbolic images of divine things, namely angels. In this framework, the symbols best suited for contemplation of divinity are non-resembling, since the intellect cannot adhere to these symbols and become simply mired in its material reality. Xanthopoulos’s epigram describes this very process: either matter has overcome its limitations and ascended to spirit or spirit has condescended to be captured in matter; the issue is not resolved, in fact is unresolvable, and leaves the image as allusive to the model in some indeterminate but compelling way. By this lack of essential likeness, the viewer is forced beyond the material surface to contemplation of a transcendent reality. In other words, images of angels remained fine examples of areopagite symbols.

The numerous epigrams of Manuel Philes (ca. 1275–ca. 1345) on images of angels exhibit the same basic dependence upon this neo-Platonic framework. Like other epigram writers, Philes engaged the

16. “Νικηφόρος Κάλλιστος Ξανθόπουλος,” ed. A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *BZ* 11(1902):46–47 (#16); trans. C. Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire. 312–1453. Sources and Documents* (Toronto, 1986) 231.

incongruity of matter attempting to capture a spiritual creature. Writing on an image of an Archangel, Philes noted that paradoxically the matter of the image contains intellect, spirit, light and fire; the image is “intellect visible, spirit caught fast.”¹⁷ More strangely, he wrote, the flame submitted to be captured in human form, clothed, with hair and feathers, but marvelously the icon does not burn. The face ought to be red to indicate that fiery nature but, instead, the painter has used clever artifice and manipulated material color, that is yellow, to show the fire of the model. Like Xanthopoulus’s epigram, this epigram reveals an awareness of the distance between craft that deceitfully manifests an angelic form and the reality that is unknowable and uncontrollable; in fact, this tension makes these images remarkable and compelling for the writers. At the same time as the images appear to make the Archangel apprehensible, they declare his transcendence:

Just now we see a strange blending in life. The painter mingles the flame with water. For having described the immaterial nature by means of flesh, he provides water to the faithful [to quench] the flames of desire.¹⁸

As the texts adduced in this Conclusion show, the irresolvable problem of depicting angels became a determining and compelling feature that always made their images a distinctive kind of representation. Representing angels brought angels nearer to their desiring worshippers, as Xanthopoulus averred, but not so near as to satisfy

17. *Manuelis Philae carmina ex codicibus Escurialensis, Florentinis, Parisinis et Vaticanis*, ed. E. Miller, 2 vols. (Paris, 1855–1857) II:202 (CLXXXVII).

18. *Manuelis Philae carmina*, II:415 (XLVIII). Philes also wrote the following two epigrams: “‘On an icon of the Archangel Michael’: If you desire to depict animation, Why do you depict, painter, a winged man, But not the intellect and spirit and light and flames? If not for the fact that no one can depict the immaterial in matter?” (*ibid.*, I:357–58 [CXCII]) and, “‘On the guardian in stone’: You (are) spirit and flame, but behold, before me you do not burn. And you are found as a guard armed for us. Michael, loosening all darkening of sufferings into stony fire, you return to the light” (*ibid.*, II:158–59 [CXVIII]). See also *Manuelis Philae carmina graeca*, ed. G. Wernsdorf (Leipzig, 1768) 28ff. (I.109ff.). Philes also wrote an epigram on the miracle at Chonae; see *Manuelis Philae carmina*, II:236 (CCXXVI).

that desire; as all writers on images of angels maintained, the angels are always absent from their images. But, by representing these creatures materially as well as verbally, Byzantines felt this spiritual world was made tantalizingly near and an immanence was provisionally contained.

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